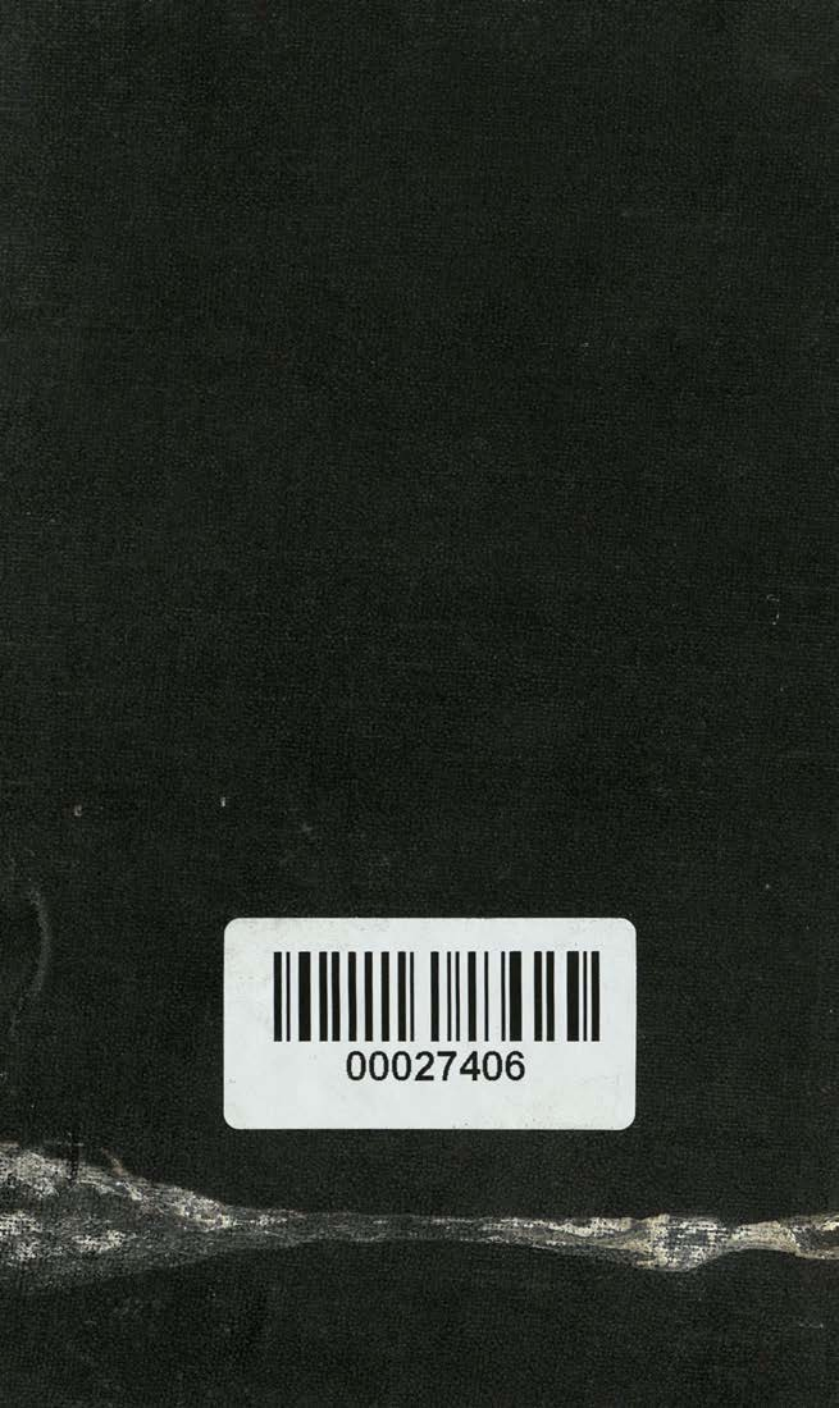
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PAUPERISM:

ITS CAUSES AND REMEDIES.

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ITS CAUSES AND REMEDIES.

BY

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PREFACE.

THIS book contains the substance of a course of lectures which I delivered in the University of Cambridge, during the October term of 1870, on Pauperism, its Causes and Remedies. For many reasons I found it more convenient not to publish the book in the form of lectures.

I cannot refrain from acknowledging the great assistance I have derived from my wife in preparing these lectures for publication. Not only was the subject of the lectures suggested by her, but she has carefully revised every page, and by pointing out various alterations and improvements has rendered me most valuable aid. I am also much indebted to the youth who has so carefully and patiently acted for me as an amanuensis.

For the convenience of the reader, an alphabetical index is added to the end of the book.

CAMBRIDGE, 1871.

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PAUPERISM:

ITS CAUSES AND REMEDIES.

CHAPTER I.

PAUPERISM, AND THE OLD POOR LAW.

We are accustomed to hear much boasting about the vast wealth of England. We are told that our exports and imports are rapidly increasing; glowing descriptions are given of an Empire upon which the sun never sets, and of a commerce which extends over the world. Our mercantile marine is ever increasing; manufactories are augmenting in number and in magnitude. All the evidences of growing luxury are around us; there are more splendid equipages in the parks and the style of living is each year becoming more sumptuous. This is one side of the picture; and if we could look upon it and close our eyes to other sights, and close our ears to other sounds that are around us, we might fold ourselves in the mantle of self-complacency, and repeat the platitudes so often uttered that nothing can exceed the happiness

and prosperity of England. But let us look on another side of the picture; and what do we then observe? Side by side with this vast wealth, closely contiguous to all this sinful luxury there stalks the fearful spectre of wide-spread poverty, and of growing pauperism! Visit the great centres of our commerce and trade, and what will be observed? The direst poverty always accompanying the greatest wealth! Any one visiting Manchester or Liverpool, contemplates with wonder the vastness of the manufactories; the range of docks filled with shipping extending over miles; the leading thoroughfares are broad; the shops contain everything which can gratify the tastes of the most wealthy; the merchants often live in princely style, and dispense a splendid hospitality. But within a stone's throw of these docks, of these manufactories, and of these stately streets there will be found miserable alleys and narrow courts, in which people drag out an existence steeped in a misery and a wretchedness which baffles description. In thousands of cases all the members of a family live in some dark and unwholesome cellar, and no inconsiderable portion of the population of our large towns herd together, father, mother and children, in a single room. Not long since I was conversing with a West-end clergyman, and he was speaking not of Bethnal Green, nor of Seven Dials, but of a street quite within the precincts of luxurious and glittering Belgravia, in which he knew from his personal knowledge that every house had a separate family living in each room. Dr Whitmore, the medical superintendent of Marylebone, in a recent report, states that in his district

there are hundreds of houses with a family in every room; he also says that the number of poor is increasing, and the manner in which they are housed is becoming worse and worse. But if these general descriptions are doubted the same sad tale is only too surely verified by specific facts which the utmost ingenuity cannot explain away. Official returns show that in London there are never less than 125,000 paupers, and that as each winter recurs the number rises to 170,000. There is abundant reason to conclude that a number at least equally large are just on the verge of pauperism; often struggling with admirable resolution to obtain their own livelihood, and frequently suffering far more than is endured by the recipients of parochial relief. But it is not only in our large towns that this wide-spread poverty is to be observed; the condition of the rural population is scarcely more satisfactory. A Royal Commission has lately made a most complete and searching investigation into the condition of those who are employed in agriculture. I shall have frequently to refer to the evidence which they collected. It is sufficient here to state that it was proved beyond all dispute that in a great number of counties these labourers earn only 9*s.* or 10*s.* a week; in some districts their children could not grow up in greater ignorance if England had lost her Christianity and her civilization; the houses in which in many cases they are compelled to dwell do not deserve the name of human habitations. A country gentleman would be shunned by his associates if he ventured to stable his horses or to kennel his hounds in such wretched hovels. It is no

palliation, but on the contrary it is an aggravation of such a state of things to be reminded that the soil was never so well cultivated, that more skill and capital are devoted to agriculture, that the value of land is each year increasing, that the competition for farms is keen, and that rents are rapidly rising. How comes it that the augmented produce is so distributed that the condition of those who till the soil has not only not improved, but has in some cases retrograded? How, again, does it happen that the greater is the wealth accumulated in our large towns, the deeper seem to be the depths of poverty into which vast multitudes sink? By an official return just issued it is shown that there is at the present time an annual increase, amounting to £10,000,000, in the export and import trade of this country. When this return was published the press warmly congratulated the country upon its satisfactory condition. The very day these congratulations appeared a letter was written to a leading London journal by the vicar of a London parish, containing the following statements. "Fever, and especially scarlet fever, abounds. In one court, with only 11 houses, there are five cases; in a small street close by there are 18. These are but samples of what might be found throughout the parish. It is largely the result of want,...One poor fellow a ventilating blind-maker, whose children have been at our schools for years, has been out of work for eighteen months; two of his children were buried in the same grave a few days since, and now a third is at death's door. Another poor fellow, a carpenter, has been searching in vain for work, for months. The sight of his

desolated home and starving children, was more than he could bear; he left home, and judging from a strange letter he has left behind, it is feared he has committed suicide. His wife and small children have nothing but the scanty earnings from a mangle on which to live. Another poor fellow, of exceptional ability, fond of reading and perfectly steady and sober, has been literally driven mad by long anxiety and distress. Hopes perpetually disappointed, opportunities of earning bread for himself and his family denied him, have been more than he could bear, and he is now in a lunatic asylum....Cases could be multiplied of sorrow and want; with fever stalking abroad people need more than a little weak tea and dry bread to keep them in health....The parish is inhabited exclusively by the poor*."

The great inequalities in wealth to which allusion has just been made may be traced to agencies so numerous and varied in their operation that there is some difficulty in choosing the starting-point of our investigations. I have, however, at last come to a very definite conclusion, that it is necessary in the first place to trace the effects which have been, and are still being produced by our Poor Laws. I was confirmed in this opinion by listening to a debate which lately took place in Parliament upon the extent to which England may at the present time be regarded as prosperous. Mr Torrens, the member for Finsbury, in a very able speech declared

* These statements are made in a letter written to the *Times* by the Rev. Robert Gregory, Vicar of St Mary the Less, Lambeth.

it was the duty of the Government to do something for the unemployed. He gave a most harrowing description of the misery which prevailed in many of our large towns; he declared that the evil was growing, and that it was the duty of the Government to attempt to check it by State-emigration.

Mr Goschen, the President of the Poor Law Board replied on behalf of the Government; and in a speech which was warmly admired by wealthy manufacturers and capitalists, he gave a most glowing account of the advancing prosperity of the country. He affirmed that the people were consuming more tea and sugar, drinking more beer and spirits; and for reasons very difficult to explain he drew consolation from the fact that there were only 10,000 more paupers in England now than there were a twelvemonth since. I shall probably have occasion to notice some of the contradictory statements which were made in this discussion; I refer to it, however, here chiefly for this reason; both speakers were careful to guard themselves against being led into a consideration of the Poor Laws. What was the result? An impression was produced upon all who heard or read the debate that it was vague and inconclusive; the reason of this was simply that our Poor Laws have exerted and are still exerting such a powerful influence upon the character of the people as to render any examination into the social state of the country perfectly nugatory which excludes them from the investigation.

It would be presumptuous to place any definite limits to the possible development of man as a moral and re-

sponsible being. It is at any rate an encouraging belief, and one that will stimulate an ennobling activity, to have faith in the indefinite capacity of the human race to improve. The time may come when no one will show any anxiety to escape his due share of labour, and when all will recognise the grave responsibility which is incurred in not making adequate provision for those who are dependent upon them. If man should ever obtain this ideal social state poverty will be exterminated, many of the most perplexing economic problems will have solved themselves, and many questions which are now of the greatest practical importance will cease to possess any but a speculative interest. But as it has been in the past, so is it at the present time: men have generally fallen far short of the ideal just indicated. A vast number in every community are so constituted that they would rather let others labour for them than labour themselves, they will not work unless they are compelled to do so. There are always a great number who will not hesitate to gratify a desire, even if by doing so they cast a burden and inflict suffering upon others. From such conduct many obvious consequences ensue. Those who refuse from indolence to work, or who are prevented from working by incapacity, must, after a time be either maintained by others, or starve. To see a fellow-creature die from want is so abhorrent to the least sensitive that relief is given to the starving, even by those who are actuated by no higher motive than a desire to avoid the pain of seeing others acutely suffer. It therefore follows that in all times and in all countries relief is granted in some form or other to

those who are reduced to the extremity of want. Those who need relief may be divided into two classes. First, there are those whose poverty is voluntary; this includes all that distress which arises either from indolence, self-indulgence, or from any other causes for which the individual who suffers is alone responsible. Secondly, there is involuntary poverty, which includes all those cases in which people become indigent through no fault of their own; thus children may be reduced to want in consequence of the extravagance, the recklessness, or the immorality of their parents; a man may spend in vice and intemperance that which ought to be given to the support of his children; or his children may be impoverished because he was so imprudent as to marry before he had any reasonable opportunity of making a proper provision for his family. Other examples of involuntary poverty may be easily given. Labourers may be thrown out of employment by a financial crisis produced through the over-speculation of their employers. The resources of a country may be so exhausted by war that great branches of industry become paralysed, and numbers who are dependent upon them lose all means of support. Again, deep distress may also be caused by some circumstance which man has no power to control; thus, an inclement season may deprive a population of its ordinary means of support. These examples are sufficient to indicate the important and fundamental distinction between voluntary and involuntary poverty. The latter ought to excite the judicious sympathy and aid of all who have the power to give relief.

With regard, however to voluntary poverty it will be one main object of these pages to prove that the leniency and want of firmness with which it has been treated may probably be regarded as the most powerful of all the agencies which have produced the widespread distress which afflicts even the most wealthy countries.

In order to make the subject as clear as possible it is necessary to distinguish between the two modes in which relief to the poor can be granted. In the first place relief may assume the form of almsgiving or charity; or, secondly, the funds distributed amongst the poor may be administered by the State and be obtained through the ordinary channels of either imperial or local taxation. In this latter case a country is said to have a Poor Law. In England there was not any real Poor Law until the reign of Elizabeth. And until as recently as 1838, the relief of the poor in Ireland was not organised by the State; it was rather left to the uncertain chances of voluntary charity. The causes which led to the gradual establishment of a Poor Law in England may be readily traced. As long as the relief of the poor was left to individual, and consequently unorganised, efforts it is obvious that many mischievous consequences would be sure to ensue. Indiscriminate almsgiving always in the end demoralizes those whom it is intended to benefit, and intensifies the evils which it seeks to alleviate. Those evidently obtain the largest share of private charity who can excite in others the strongest sympathy for their sufferings.

Mendicancy thus becomes a profession, in which the greatest success is often secured by those who are skilled in hypocrisy and falsehood. From a system of unorganised charity there also result many other grave evils. Those, for instance, who become most accomplished in the art of begging frequently obtain far more than can be earned by honest toil. A direct encouragement is thus offered to indolence, and a most disastrous influence is brought into operation to undermine the industrial efficiency of the country. National prosperity is sapped at its very foundations when once the feeling is spread that the bounty of the charitable will enable men to live without labour. The demoralization which follows is so great that men become utterly reckless; they act as if they had ceased to be responsible beings; they soon begin to think that saving is unnecessary; if all that they obtain is spent in self-indulgence, there will always be the charitable to fall back upon. They ignore any obligation which they owe to their children; they soon consider that it is a right which ought not to be disputed, that they should marry whether they are in a position to support a family or not, and they consider that maintenance ought to be provided for as many children as they choose to call into existence. Not only is this pernicious influence exerted upon the recipient of alms, but mischief is done to those who give as well as to those who receive. Charitable bequests have often been prompted by superstition. The opinion has always been prevalent amongst certain classes that money will wipe away the gravest sin. Charity is too frequently

prompted by the love of ostentation. It also sometimes happened that a number of mendicants gave either some institution or some wealthy patron upon whom they were dependent a dangerous predominance of power. Mendicancy and vagrancy, fostered in the manner described, grew to such serious proportions in this country that it was attempted to regulate them in numerous Acts of Parliament. Throughout the various statutes which were passed for this purpose one leading idea, based on principles which were incontestably sound, can generally be traced. Parliament showed the utmost care to indicate that broad fundamental distinction already described between voluntary and involuntary poverty; various local authorities were enjoined to treat with sympathy and liberality all whose poverty was involuntary; a severe measure of justice was however meted out to voluntary mendicancy. An able-bodied man who preferred to beg rather than to work excited most intense indignation in the legislatures of those days. Such a one was in sundry acts of Parliament of Richard II. and in succeeding reigns termed a "sturdy vagabond" and "a valiant beggar." In one of these statutes it was decreed that if such a one were detected applying for relief when work was to be had, he was for the first offence to be whipped; for the second offence one of his ears was to be cropped; and if he offended a third time he was to be hung as an enemy to the commonwealth. The purpose of these acts was defeated by their extreme severity; such penalties were too harsh to be generally inflicted. Mendicancy and

vagrancy went on increasing in spite of the efforts of the legislature to check them; the evil at length became so threatening to the well-being of the country that the necessity of adopting a different policy became generally recognised. In the reign of Henry VIII. two statutes were passed in which may be detected the germs of the celebrated Act of Elizabeth, from which our Poor Law system originated. These Acts of Henry VIII. not only rendered each locality responsible for the support of its own poor, but also attempted the extremely useful work of regulating the giving of alms. The impotent poor were to be sent to the place where they were born, and the local authorities were, under the pain of heavy penalties, enjoined to treat them with kindness and liberality. With regard to the able-bodied or voluntary paupers a very different policy was to be adopted; work was to be provided for them, and if they did not accept it they were severely punished. But the most important provisions in these Acts were those which regulated almsgiving. All who desired to give relief to the poor were ordered to place their contributions in a common fund which was distributed by the bishop and clergy. If any one omitted to do this, and dispensed charity privately, he rendered himself liable to a penalty equal to ten times the amount which he had given away.

The intentions of those who framed these acts were excellent; they evidently desired to create a distinct line of demarcation between voluntary and involuntary pauperism, and they not unreasonably hoped by discouraging indiscriminate almsgiving, to diminish men-

dicancy and vagrancy. But from the severe enactments which were subsequently passed against mendicancy it is evident that the wise intentions of these legislators were to a great extent defeated. The reason of their failure can be readily understood. The distributors of the common fund had no power to impose a rate, and thus obtain from individuals contributions in proportion to their means. This defect in the law probably impressed itself upon Elizabeth and her advisers, and as a natural consequence, a remedy was suggested which was embodied in the celebrated Act passed in the 43rd year of her reign, and to which reference has already been made. The main provisions of this Act may be briefly described. It gave for the first time to every one a legal right to claim relief. In order to obtain the fund which the provision of this relief required, local authorities were empowered to impose a rate upon all such real property as land and houses; the able-bodied were by its provisions compelled to work as a condition of obtaining relief; the cost of maintaining able-bodied paupers was thrown upon any of their natural relations who could afford to bear the charge. The Act also provided for the annual appointment in each parish of overseers, who were responsible for the collection of rates, and the administration of relief. There is so little difference in all important principles between these provisions and those which were embodied in the new Poor Law of 1834, that it may at first sight seem difficult to understand why this latter Act was ever required. There probably never would have been any necessity for

passing it had not the Poor Law of Elizabeth been most mischievously tampered with.

It is obvious from the description just given of its leading provisions that one of the chief objects of its framers was to deal rigorously with voluntary pauperism. For 150 years this policy was continued with the happiest results. Mendicancy and vagrancy greatly diminished, and the restrictions imposed upon able-bodied paupers were regarded by them as so onerous that few, except the impotent poor, applied for relief. Between the passing of the Act in 1601 and the time to which we refer several amending statutes were passed; none of these however weakened, some of them materially strengthened, the original purpose of the Act. Thus, in 1723 the ninth year of the reign of George I., a parish, or union of parishes, was empowered to build a workhouse, and the offer of residence in it, if not accepted, was a bar against relief. This enabled local authorities to diminish or even altogether to abolish out-door relief. I shall have occasion to show that if the power thus conferred on local authorities had been more extensively taken advantage of, a vast proportion of the pauperism which has afflicted this country would never have existed. But unfortunately an entirely different policy was soon adopted by Parliament, and sanctioned by public opinion. Out-door relief, instead of being discouraged, was directly fostered by various Acts of Parliament, a lax administration of the law became general, and the result was that pauperism assumed such alarming proportions about the year

1832 as almost to threaten the country with national bankruptcy and permanent ruin. It is evident that the change of policy just indicated was gradually glided into without the slightest appreciation of the consequences involved. The great diminution in pauperism brought about by the rigorous administration of the law of Elizabeth caused a feeling to spread about the middle of the last century, that the Poor Law might be applied with more leniency, and relief granted more liberally. It unfortunately happened that this leniency and liberality were chiefly shown in granting out-door relief on more easy terms to able-bodied paupers. By an Act passed in 1767, the 7th of George III., guardians were appointed to protect the poor against the parsimony of overseers and other parish officers. Fifteen years later, by what is known as Gilbert's Act, most of the valuable safe-guards in the old Poor Law were entirely swept away. The workhouse was no longer to be used as a test of voluntary pauperism, for by this Act the able-bodied were not obliged to enter it; the guardians were ordered to find work for all able-bodied applicants near their own homes, and to make up out of the rates any deficiency in wages. The same fatal policy was continued, and was brought to a climax in 1815, when, by a statute known as East's Act, the workhouse test, imposed by 9th of George I., was now altogether removed. After the passing of this Act no one, not even an able-bodied labourer was called upon to enter the workhouse, and justices were empowered to make money grants to people at their own homes.

The extent to which the industrial classes were demoralized by these relaxations of the Poor Law soon became only too evident. The most pernicious influence was exerted, not only upon the poor, but also upon their employers; every agency which could most powerfully promote pauperism had been brought into operation; men were virtually told that no amount of recklessness, self-indulgence, or improvidence would in the slightest degree affect their claim to be maintained at other people's expense. If they married when they had no reasonable chance of being able to maintain a family, they were treated as if they had performed a meritorious act, for the more children they had the greater was the amount of relief they obtained. All the most evident teachings of common sense were completely set at nought; labour was bribed to remain in localities where it was not wanted; and it was prevented passing to those districts where there was a demand for it. Thus if wages in any parish were below what it was thought would provide a reasonable maintenance the local authorities were empowered to grant an allowance in aid of wages. These evils were aggravated by various enactments known under the general name of the Laws of Settlement, which were passed with a view of hindering labourers from leaving the localities in which they were born. The allowance system and the Laws of Settlement, though acting in very different ways, combined to impede the natural flow of labour. However great a surplus of labour there might be in any locality the employed had no inducement to leave it, as long as their wages were

made up to the average amount by grants from the rates. The employer, not caring about or understanding ulterior consequences, was apparently interested in keeping a supply of surplus labour about him; it produced a low rate of wages, and he was virtually able to put his hand into the pockets of the neighbouring ratepayers to make up the deficiency to those whom he employed. The Law of Settlement placed such impediments in the way of a labourer passing from one district to another that to a great extent men were constrained to seek employment only in the place of their birth. Few enactments have ever produced more wide-spread mischief. Adam Smith, in the *Wealth of Nations*, says that probably in his time there was scarcely an artisan of forty-five years of age who had not at one period or another suffered some grievous wrong from the Law of Settlement.

By the joint operation of all the baneful influences just described a most alarming demoralization was produced. The extent to which it affected not only the employed, but also the employers, was brought to light by the searching investigations of the Royal Commission which was appointed in 1832 to enquire into the Poor Laws. Amongst the Commissioners were some leading public men, and all their arrangements seem to have been devised with the object of making their examination of the subject as accurate and scrutinizing as possible. Assistant Commissioners were appointed not only personally to visit, and take evidence in different parts of England, but they were sent to foreign countries in order that they might enquire into the various modes of

administering relief to the poor. The evils of our Poor Law system were so fully unfolded that the necessity for some radical reform became generally recognised. After having to contend with much opposition from those who supposed themselves to be interested in the abuses of the old system, an Act was passed in 1834 which has continued without much alteration up to the present time. This Act is generally known as the New Poor Law; and before describing its more important provisions it will be useful to recount some facts which were brought to light by the Royal Commission of 1832. All the general objections which have been urged against the relaxation of the checks upon voluntary pauperism were strikingly corroborated by specific facts. In some districts out-door relief was granted to the able-bodied upon so liberal a scale that pauperism became a very remunerative employment. One of the Assistant Commissioners who visited Eastbourne found that paupers who worked were paid at the rate of 16*s.* a week, whereas the average wages in the district were only 12*s.* a week. The inferiority of the independent workman's pecuniary position was so notorious that this Commissioner actually heard two women complain that their husbands would not better their lot by becoming paupers. In North Devonshire and in many other parts of England so large an allowance was granted for each additional child that was born, that the more numerous a man's family was the better his circumstances became. An artificial stimulus was thus given to population; the evils which ensued have not yet passed away, for they can still be traced in

the miserable pittance of 9*s.* or 10*s.*, which in many rural districts is paid for a week's work. Population was also fostered by a still more immoral stimulus. A woman obtained from the parish a larger allowance for an illegitimate than for a legitimate child. From one end of the kingdom to the other people were in fact told not only to marry with utter recklessness and let others bear the consequences, but it was also said, especially to the women of the country, the greater is your immorality the greater will be your pecuniary reward. Can it excite surprise that from such a system we should have had handed down to us a vast inheritance of vice and poverty?

The subject presents equally melancholy aspects from whatever point it is viewed. Pauperism often came to be regarded as a paying profession which was followed by successive generations of the same family. Thus the Commissioners tell us of three generations of the same family simultaneously receiving relief; and the amount they drew from the parish exceeded £100 per annum. As a natural consequence of the parish authorities being enjoined to find work at remunerative wages for all their poor, the feeling soon became general that pauperism was no disgrace, and that the allowance which was obtained from the parish was just as much the rightful property of those who received it, as the wages of ordinary industry. Indolence was thus directly encouraged, and a spirit of lawlessness and discontent resulted. Although 1832 was a year of plenty, when bread and other provisions were cheap, yet at this time many of the rural districts were in a very disturbed state; riots

and incendiary fires were of common occurrence, and the Commissioners proved that these outbursts of popular discontent were most frequent in those localities where the Poor Law had been administered with the greatest laxity. It was not alone the poor who were demoralized by such a state of things; the distributors of parochial relief too often were guilty of various forms of peculation: it could scarcely be expected that a very high standard of morality would prevail amongst employers when they were able partly to provide their wages out of the rates, or in other words, were able to take their neighbour's property in order to pay their labourers. The cost of pauperism grew constantly greater; rates so rapidly increased that it became evident they would soon absorb the whole fund from which they were provided. In some districts the rates absorbed more than remained of the produce of the soil, after all the expenses of cultivation had been paid. The Commissioners tell us that many farms were given up, that several of the clergy relinquished their glebes, and that much fertile land was thrown out of tillage. They mention one parish, Cholesbury, Berkshire, in which the whole land was offered to the assembled paupers, but they refused it, saying they would rather continue on the old system. Such a case may appear incredible, could it not be corroborated by much similar evidence. The Commissioners ascertained that a gentleman who cultivated his own estate of about 500 acres, at Shelford, near Cambridge, annually paid in poor rates £250; the land to rent was worth about £1 per acre; the rates consequently absorbed half the

letting value of the farm. But great as was the charge thus imposed, it by no means represented the entire burden of pauperism. At Shelford, as in many other localities, it was the practice to allot the able-bodied paupers to different farmers; each farmer was consequently obliged to employ a number of paupers in proportion to the extent of his holding, whether he required their labour or not. The gentleman to whom reference has just been made, proved that so much of the labour thus imposed upon him was of no use whatever, that it caused him an annual loss of at least £100 a year. The whole annual cost of pauperism on this farm of 500 acres was therefore £350. If rates had gone on increasing for a few years as they were at the time the New Poor Law was introduced it is evident that this annual charge of £350 would soon have grown into more than £500; this would have represented a higher rent than the land was able to bear, and consequently there would have been no other alternative but to have thrown it out of cultivation. When it is remembered that this was by no means an exceptional case, but might on the contrary be regarded as typical of the condition of a large part of the country, it at once becomes manifest that England was at that time threatened with ruin.

It has just been seen that a most onerous tax was inflicted upon employers by the plan of allotting to them a certain amount of pauper labour; this was however by no means the greatest evil of the system. Evidence was repeatedly given that farmers and others were so much burdened with this pauper labour, that in order to make room for it they were often obliged to dismiss

valued workmen. A farmer near Royston told the Commissioners that he tried hard to retain two excellent workmen who had been long in his employment, but at length he was obliged to dismiss them in consequence of so many pauper labourers being forced upon him. He also said, referring to the two paupers who took the place of the workmen he so reluctantly dismissed, that one of them turned out to be a dangerous thief, and the other an habitual drunkard. The paupers were so demoralized by a life of dependence and indolence that they were generally the worst characters in the neighbourhood. Even when they were not paid high wages their labour was most costly; it was reluctantly given; it was unskilled, and they had to be worked in gangs in order that they might be the more effectually watched[1]. Pauper labour had in fact many of the economic defects of slave labour. This painful recital of the ignorance, folly and injustice of the old Poor Law and the demoralization and degradation that resulted, has been by no means exhausted; but enough has been said to enable us to understand the nature of the more prominent abuses which needed to be reformed at the time when the New Poor Law was passed. An explanation of the leading provisions of this Act, and an enquiry into its effects, will enable us to understand in what respects it has failed and in what it has succeeded. Having made this explanation, we shall be in a position to appreciate the reforms which are still required.

[1] Much valuable information on the old Poor Law is to be found in an able article on the Poor Law by Mr George Coode, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

CHAPTER II.

THE PRESENT POOR LAW SYSTEM.

It has already been remarked that there is little difference in any fundamental principles between the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 and the new Poor Law of 1834. The gradual relaxation of all the salutary restrictions upon voluntary pauperism contained in the former Act, as well as many grave abuses of administration, rendered new legislation absolutely necessary. By the New Act, the workhouse test was again revived, the plan of granting allowances in aid of wages was abolished, the appointment of paid overseers was provided for, and an official audit of accounts was secured. Illegitimacy was to some degree checked by making the father responsible for the support of the child, instead of rewarding the mother, as was often the case under the old system. The Laws of settlement were rendered somewhat less burdensome to the labourer; formerly it was easy to obtain a settlement in a parish either by occupation or by residence; it was now made much more difficult to do so; consequently there was

less reason to prevent new comers locating themselves in a parish, and the migration of labour was somewhat less seriously impeded. It cannot be doubted that all these changes were salutary, and that much good was effected. Rates considerably diminished; previous to 1834 the cost of pauperism amounted to about 8*s.* per head upon the whole population; it gradually diminished to between 5*s.* and 6*s.* a head; it obtained its minimum just after the passing of Free Trade, and, for reasons which will be presently explained, it has during the last few years again increased. By far the most important improvement, however, effected by the New Poor Law may be attributed to the more rigorous restrictions imposed upon able-bodied paupers. The allowance system, with its manifold abuses, which was now abolished, had directly encouraged voluntary pauperism. The workhouse test provided a most salutary check, and the greatest possible good would have resulted if it had been made obligatory upon local authorities to apply this test to all able-bodied paupers. We shall however proceed to shew that this change indicates the direction of all poor law reform, and that our aim should be by gradual steps to discourage and ultimately to abolish out-door relief.

Whilst out-door relief continues to be granted the position of those seems to be unanswerable who maintain that the evils inflicted by our Poor Law greatly preponderate over any advantages that can result from it. The legal claim which every one in this country possessed to be maintained out of the rates, represents per-

haps the most perilous responsibility ever assumed by a nation. Some of our leading statesmen endeavour to alarm us with the risk involved in the promise to defend the independence of a neighbouring nation. But what is the danger thus incurred compared with the perils involved in the promise to maintain all the pauperism that can be called into existence by encouraging indolence, and by rewarding instead of punishing those who recklessly indulge their passions? England was brought nearer to the brink of ruin by the Old Poor Law than she ever was by a hostile army. It was demonstrated by the experience gained previous to the year 1834, that if due restrictions are not imposed, it is impossible for a country long to fulfil the obligation to give relief to all applicants; the fund required for such a purpose would soon absorb the whole produce raised from the land, and would require a larger amount than is represented by the entire annual income of the nation. Many of the leading English political economists at the beginning of the present century were so much impressed with these considerations that they became strenuously opposed to all Poor Laws. Dr Chalmers' remarks on the subject are often referred to, but Malthus made by far the most formidable attack upon the principle of conferring upon every member of the community a legal claim to relief. This attack was contained in his celebrated essay on population, a book which is now unfortunately seldom read. Any one, however, who refers to this book will find the arguments against a Poor Law exhaustively stated. But it must be remembered that

Malthus and Chalmers wrote when the abuses of the old system were in full operation. So far as they sought to prove that it would be infinitely better to have no Poor Law at all than to have it administered as it was at that time, no one can doubt that their case was conclusively established. The practical problem which now presses for solution does not turn on a comparison between the old system and no Poor Law at all, nor between the existing system and no Poor Law. The question is, whether a Poor Law might not be based on such principles as to make the relief of indigence through its agency less mischievous than if such relief were left to private charity.

Fully admitting that the Act of 1834 introduced many improvements, it cannot be denied that pauperism still exists to a most alarming extent. Much of the evil influence exerted by the old Poor Law upon the general social condition of the country still continues in operation. Further investigation will, I think, shew that the chief reason why our Poor Law system continues to work so unsatisfactorily, is that the Act of 1834 placed no effectual check upon the granting of out-door relief. Throughout all England the out-door paupers are to the in-door in the proportion of about 8 to 1; it is therefore evident that the great proportion of paupers receive relief in some form or other at their own homes. The important question, therefore, to determine is, whether the granting of relief in this way constitutes an adequate check upon the improvidence, the indolence, and the self-indulgence from which almost the entire pauperism

of a country either directly or indirectly arises. It cannot be doubted that to the great mass of recipients out-door relief is far preferable to in-door relief; residence in the workhouse is regarded as a kind of imprisonment; it is also generally thought to carry with it a certain amount of discredit; in fact, it is so distasteful that people generally will not, if they possibly can help it, either enter it themselves, or allow their relatives to do so. This is strikingly corroborated by what occurs in Ireland. For many years after the Poor Law was first established in that country in 1838, no out-door relief was granted. At the present time it is much less frequently given than in England; the consequence is that instead of the out-door paupers exceeding the in-door paupers by 8 to 1, the proportion is reversed, and Ireland has nearly 5 in-door to one out-door pauper. What is the result? Ireland has been impoverished by a vicious system of land tenure and by many other adverse circumstances; the amount of her accumulated wealth is small compared with that of England[1], and yet the whole number of her paupers does not amount to one-half the number that there are in London alone. What is the reason of this extraordinary fact?

[1] From the income-tax returns it appears that £18, £13 and £5, represent the average income of each inhabitant of England, Scotland and Ireland respectively. According to this test England is more than three times and Scotland more than twice as wealthy as Ireland. It would seem however that the greatest pauperism is found where there is the greatest wealth. In England one out of every 20 of the population is a pauper. In Scotland one in 23; whereas in Ireland the proportion is only one in 74.

Only about one-fifth of the London paupers are compelled to enter the workhouse, out-door relief is supposed to involve no disgrace, and many who could do without it obtain it; and most of those who receive it would never have required it if they had exercised somewhat more self-denial and providence. It is manifest that this self-denial and providence would be more frequent, if the people were made distinctly to recognise that if they brought indigence upon themselves and their children they would not be able to have recourse to out-door relief, but would be compelled to submit to the discomfort and disgrace of residence in a workhouse. Striking instances may be mentioned of the different results produced by the English and the Irish Poor Law systems. Exposures are constantly made of the hypocrisy and fraud practised in England by professional paupers in obtaining out-door relief. The three following instances are taken from one number of the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—"Not long since the out-door paupers in the neighbourhood of Holborn were detected selling the parish loaves under their value, to invest the proceeds in fancy bread. On another occasion, an old claimant on the relief lists of St Pancras or of St Marylebone, we forget which, was summoned to the county court by his daughter's music master. It came out in evidence that the pauper and his family had been in receipt of an income much above that which many of the poorer classes of ratepayers enjoy. According to the police reports in the *Times*, a man and his wife were brought up to Worship Street for having obtained relief from the

parishioners of St John, Hackney, under false pretences. It appeared that for the last four years the prisoners had been in receipt of 4*s.* 10*d.* a week in money and kind from the parish. It was given to them on the faith of their representations, that without assistance they would starve. Early in July it was discovered, that so far from being in necessitous circumstances, they had good means of subsistence. The man had been a labourer in the Chartered Gas Works, and is now in receipt of a pension of 12*s.* weekly; his wife earns from 10*s.* to 14*s.* a week by washing and ironing. They have two sons living with them, both of whom are earning wages from a Bible Society." It is evident from such examples that out-door relief is regarded by a considerable section of our population as a fund from which they are perfectly justified in obtaining as much as possible. The more they get the better they consider themselves off. It is, in fact, looked upon as a gift which carries with it no onerous conditions. This being the case there is comparatively little inducement for people to make an effort to keep themselves or their relations off the rates. The clergy of our large towns, and others who have had much personal intercourse with the poor, deplore the effects produced by our Poor Law in weakening the bonds of relationship and affection. Children who are in receipt of good wages do not in popular estimation incur disgrace if they permit their parents to obtain a weekly allowance from the parish. In striking contrast with this it may be mentioned that in Ireland pauperism is regarded as a disgrace because

it usually involves residence in a workhouse, and the people will submit to any privations rather than allow their near relations to become paupers. Provident habits with regard to the vicissitudes of old age are thus engendered which compare most favourably with the improvidence which so frequently characterises our own poor. In many Irish counties it is the general custom among the peasantry for a young man on his marriage to succeed to his father's farm, and at the same time to make a settlement upon his parents, which serves as a provision for them for life. These prudential habits and this dread of pauperism rapidly vanish amongst the Irish who settle in England, and who are brought under the influence of the lavish distribution of out-door relief. But Scotland affords the most striking proof that a Poor Law must inevitably be mischievous in its operations if it permit the granting of out-door relief. There is every reason to anticipate from the general social character of the Scotch that less pauperism would be found amongst them than in any other country: they are proverbially thrifty, intelligent, and prudent; and contrasts have often been drawn between the saving habits of the Scotch and the spending propensities of the Irish. All *a priori* reasoning would therefore seem to show that there must necessarily be much less pauperism in Scotland than in Ireland. What, however, are the facts? At the present time there are in proportion to the population, more than three times as many paupers in Scotland as in Ireland; and in the Scotch highlands there is

twelve times as much pauperism as in Ulster and Connaught.[1] These facts, which at first appeared almost incredible, admit a very obvious explanation. In 1845 a new Poor Law was passed for Scotland; from some strange perversity on the part of our legislators this Act, instead of being modelled upon the Irish Poor Law, gave even greater facilities for the granting of out-door relief than existed in England. It soon became evident that the Scotch, though naturally prudent and thrifty, become sensibly affected by the demoralizing influence of the new system which had been introduced. An opinion rapidly grew up in many quarters that out-door relief was conferred as a gift upon the people to enable them to do without work. As an evidence of what was taking place, a suggestive complaint came from the fishermen of Wick that they could not get their nets made and repaired, for those who had formerly been employed in this work now said that it was far more comfortable for them to obtain a maintenance from the parish. It soon began to be felt that there was no disgrace in accepting parochial relief; so anxious were the people to secure some share of it, that it was ascertained that many who had sums deposited in the banks transferred the money to other names in order that they might not forfeit their chance of getting something out of the rates. These evils became so serious that a general opinion arose in favour of some change. A great number of workhouses have now been built throughout Scotland; the workhouse test can consequently be much

[1] *Westminster Review*, October, 1870.

more generally applied. Where this has been done, and where therefore out-door relief has been more sparingly given, a very decided improvement has taken place. One of the highest authorities can be quoted in corroboration of the views just expressed. The new Scotch Poor Law since it was first passed has been administered by a Board, over which Sir John M'Neill has presided. Commenting in 1859 upon the comparison between Irish and Scotch pauperism above given, and which is derived from his investigations, he says, "For so vast a disparity there must be causes which are intelligible. The tendency to rely upon parochial relief, though attempts were made to guard it by careful scrutiny and the labour test, was not checked in Ireland until the workhouse was available. The cruelty of resorting to that mode of relief was then denounced in terms of unmeasured severity; but those who looked not to present popularity, but to the permanent welfare of the people, persevered; and it may be doubted whether there is now to be found one sincere friend of the labouring classes in Ireland who has intelligently considered the subject, and who believes that the industry, the self-reliance, and the power of self-maintenance now exhibited by the people of Ireland could have been developed, as they have been in the last ten years, if out-door relief had there been as easily obtained as it now is in the Highlands of Scotland."

These remarks must go far to establish the conclusion that a Poor Law will produce mischievous results in any country in which it is applied, if it is accompanied with

the granting of out-door relief. The most cogent arguments urged by the opponents of the principle of a Poor Law apply only to the relief which is granted to people at their own homes. The following example, for instance, embodies one of the most powerful of all these arguments. Two individuals, Robinson and Smith, are fellow-workmen; they earn the same wages, they have the same number of people dependent on them, and they consequently have the same opportunity for saving. Robinson is extremely prudent, and does everything in his power to set aside some provision for his old age. By dint of constant thrift he is able, when he is too old to work, to secure for himself an annuity of 5*s.* a week. Smith never makes the slightest effort to save, but spends every shilling he can spare at the public-house. When the time comes that he is too old for work he finds himself penniless, and at once applies to the parish for maintenance. The parochial authorities, perhaps thinking it more economical, or possibly from a feeling of mistaken kindness, do not require the man to enter the workhouse, but make him an allowance in money and bread, amounting to 5*s.* a week. Robinson, hearing of this, naturally thinks it extremely hard that he should not obtain some assistance from the rates. He is able to urge this claim upon the local authorities: My fellow-workman, Smith, and I have had the same chances in life; you give him 5*s.* a week; if you will only grant me less than half this sum, say 2*s.* a week, my life will be made much more comfortable; I shall be able to have better food, and in the winter to use more fuel, and wear warmer clothes.

The authorities reply: You, Robinson, are the possessor of an annuity of 5*s.* a week; this is just sufficient to maintain you; and it is our duty to render assistance only to those who have not sufficient to live upon. Robinson may reply: You give me nothing because I have made an effort to do something for myself; you give my fellow-workman an amount equal to that which I have been able to save, because he has spent every spare shilling at the public-house. It is impossible to gainsay the truth of this conclusion; the example just quoted represents no imaginary case; thousands like it are occurring, and must occur every day, under our present Poor Law system, for by it the improvident are rewarded, the thrifty are sent empty away. In order, however, to obtain a clearer insight into the whole subject it will be useful to trace some of the consequences which must ensue whenever such a case as that just described occurs.

It is in the first place obvious that providence must be most disastrously discouraged. The careful workman, Robinson, will of course freely express the opinion that there is little good in striving to do something for yourself when you find that in the end you are no better off than those who have spent all that they have earned. The case of the two workmen whose position has been here contrasted may be exhibited in another aspect, which will afford even a stronger condemnation of the present system of administering relief. One of these men, Robinson, not only makes an effort to save, but thoroughly does his duty by his children. He stints himself in order to give them a good education, and he

keeps them as long as possible at school. His fellow-workman, Smith, on the other hand, ignores every duty which he owes to his children; he sends them to work directly they can earn a shilling or two a week, in order that he may have more to spend at the public-house. When Robinson becomes old his children are able and are willing to do something for him; they consequently make him an allowance of 5*s.* a week. Smith's children, as a natural result of the way they have been brought up, are either not able, or are unwilling, to do any thing for their parents. What is the result? That which has been previously described again occurs; Robinson, because he is assisted by his children gets nothing from the parish; Smith, because his misconduct has made his children as badly off as himself, secures from the rates a sum equivalent to that which is allowed to Robinson by his children. Is it possible to suggest any arrangement which can produce more social demoralization than a system which collects a vast sum to be annually distributed as rewards for improvidence, and for the neglect of all the duties of kinship?

Other points of view from which the present method of parochial relief may be considered indicate equally unsatisfactory results. Probably the most disastrous effect resulting from a Poor Law is the encouragement it gives to a reckless increase of population. The full extent of the peril which a nation incurs by conferring upon everyone a legal claim to be maintained can only be properly appreciated by remembering that each individual not only possesses this claim for himself, but possesses it

also for all the children he may choose to call into existence. A man may marry when he has no reasonable chance of maintaining a family, he may do so even when he knows that from enfeebled health or from the difficulty of obtaining employment, he shall soon have to come upon the parish. Imprudent before marriage, he of course shows no prudence during marriage; he consequently impoverishes himself, and causes a large number of paupers to be born. Such a man inflicts an injury upon society, he is an enemy to the well-being of the State, and yet he it is who is sure to obtain the largest amount of assistance from the rates. It will be instructive to examine this case in greater detail. The man who acts in the manner just described probably belongs to some trade or to some locality in which, from a redundancy in the supply of labour, wages are so low as scarcely to provide a bare maintenance. One consequence of his imprudence is still further to reduce wages, and an injury is thus inflicted upon the whole wage-receiving class. Then again it must be borne in mind that he does that which he knows is certain to increase the rates. Each augmentation of rates adds to the burden of the industrious, and renders the lot of those more difficult who are striving to support themselves by honest toil. Those who are constantly making demands for the more liberal administration of parochial relief, or who say that the State should find employment for all who seek it, or should pay the travelling expenses of those who wish to obtain employment in other localities, speak as if a fund provided by imperial or local taxation represents a perennial source

of wealth, ever kept spontaneously supplied by the bounty of nature. But the remark is not less true now than it was when made by Adam Smith, that taxation takes out of the pockets of the people far more than it yields either to an imperial or local exchequer. Rates have in many districts of England nearly reached their maximum; so many thousands live just on the verge of pauperism, that any addition to local burdens may make many who were before the payers of rates become the recipients of parochial relief. Not long since an unusually heavy rate was imposed in Poplar, a parish in the East end of London. The rate was so onerous that many of those upon whom it was levied were unable to pay it. The rate consequently yielded little more than half the estimated amount. It was necessary, however, to obtain the money required; and there was no other way of raising it except through rating, A still heavier rate had consequently to be imposed; the poverty of the district, already severe, was greatly intensified. Various local industries which had been declining experienced greater difficulty in continuing the struggle; a diminution in the demand for labour and an augmentaton of rates consequently accompanied each other. A locality thus circumstanced may be regarded as threatened with industrial dissolution.

The artificial stimulus given to population by our Poor Law causes other evils besides those already mentioned. It is a well-known conclusion from fundamental principles of economic science, that the value of agricultural produce tends to rise, as the demand for it increases;

in other words, after a country has obtained a certain density of population, food must become more costly with each augmentation in the number of those to be fed. The reason of this is very obvious. If a larger quantity of agricultural produce is required, resort must be had to less productive soils[1], which, because they are less productive, involve a greater cost in their cultivation; consequently the produce yielded must rise in price in order to compensate the cultivators. This subject will be discussed at greater length in a chapter devoted to the general question of population. Sufficient, however, has been said to justify the adoption of the conclusion that any agency which stimulates population must exert a very powerful effect in increasing the cost of food. It therefore appears that our existing Poor Laws prejudicially affect the working-classes in two distinct ways; in the first place, by augmenting the number of competitors in the labour-market wages are reduced; and secondly, by increasing the demand for food, and thus rendering it more costly, the reduced wages will purchase a smaller quantity of commodities than the same amount of money would previously procure.

From whatever point of view the social and economic condition of the country is examined, some mischief is sure to be detected arising from the existing method of granting parochial relief. Disappointment is frequently expressed that the poor do not more generally avail themselves

[1] The word productive here includes not only fertility but also convenience of situation.

of Friendly Societies, and similar institutions intended to foster prudential habits. Mr Gladstone, a few years since, succeeded in passing through Parliament a most admirable scheme which enables people, by the deposit every fortnight of a small sum, to obtain a Government annuity for their old age. Corresponding facilities were also offered for life insurance[1]. All these schemes have hitherto been comparative failures; the reason of this is not difficult to explain. Most of the pecuniary advantages which are obtained from a Friendly Society, or from the possession of a Government annuity, are also conferred upon the recipients of out-door relief. Thus, reverting to a former example; the case of two workmen may be taken, one of whom is prudent, and the other is a spendthrift. The prudent workman puts aside 1*s.* a week, and thus in his old age becomes entitled to 5*s.* a week, either by being a member of some Friendly Society, or from the

[1] The principal rules of the Government Insurance and Annuity Office can be obtained at any Post Office. The Postmaster-General is empowered to ensure the life of any person, man or woman, between the ages of 16 and 60, for not less than £20 or more than £100. The life of a man or woman can be insured in his or her 30th year for £100, either by a single payment of £46. 3*s.* 7*d.*; by an annual payment throughout life of £2. 6*s.* 7*d.*; by a quarterly payment of 13*s.*; by a monthly payment of 4*s.* 4*d.*, or by a fortnightly payment of 2*s.* 2*d.* A man aged 30 may purchase an annuity of £10 to commence on his reaching the age of 60, by an annual payment of £1. 8*s.* 4*d.* A man aged 30 may purchase an allowance of £1 14*s.* 2*d.* per month, to commence when he attains the age of 60, by a monthly payment of 8*s.*; and a woman of like age, by a like payment, until she reaches the age of 60, may purchase an allowance of £1. 9*s.* 4*d.* per month.

possession of a Goverment annuity; by insuring his life, he also makes a similar provision for his widow. The other workman, spending every shilling he can get at the public-house, makes no provision for his old age; he knows that he and those whom he may leave behind will be able to claim maintenance from parochial relief. When the time comes that he is unable to work, the parish authorities consequently give him an allowance, and he finds himself nearly as well off as the member of a Friendly Society, or the possessor of a Government annuity. An event which lately happened in a western county will serve as a striking illustration of the extent to which prudential habits are discouraged by the distribution of large parochial funds amongst those whose improvidence is their only title for public support. Not many months since a report appeared of a large meeting which had been held of Somersetshire colliers. The meeting appears to have been suggested, and everything connected with it arranged, by the workmen themselves. The object of the gathering was to promote the formation of a Friendly Society. There was at first an unanimous feeling in favour of the proposal; presently it was mentioned by one of the speakers that those who became members of the Friendly Society would lose all chance of obtaining parochial relief. The whole tone of the meeting became changed; the hint, having once been given, it was quickly seen that the amount which they might subscribe to the Friendly Society would simply reduce the rates; a resolution was ultimately passed that the society should not be established as long as a claim to a

share of the rates was forfeited by belonging to it. The whole scheme was ultimately dropped. It is difficult to over-estimate the mischief which such an occurrence must produce. Colliers are proverbially an improvident class, and a movement which must have promoted the development of prudential habits amongst them was prematurely nipped in the bud by an extraneous circumstance which legislation has created and has the power to control.

Many other evil consequences, in addition to those which have been here enumerated, may be fairly attributed to the existing Poor Law. Enough, however, has been said to establish the conclusion that it would be far better altogether to abolish the Poor Law than that the present state of things should continue. But before deciding in favour of a change so fundamental, it is necessary very carefully to enquire whether it is possible so to change the mode of granting parochial relief as to obviate the greater part of the mischief produced by the present system. The opinion has already been expressed, that if out-door relief were not permitted the chief encouragement now given to improvidence would cease to operate, and that pauperism would be much more effectually checked than if the relief of the poor were entirely left to voluntary charity and to indiscriminate almsgiving.

Briefly summarizing the comments which have been made on our Poor Law, it will be seen that most of the adverse criticism it has called forth rests on the supposition that out-door relief is granted. For instance, if this were not so, the example would cease to

be apposite in which two workmen are contrasted, one of whom gets a weekly allowance from the rates because he has been improvident, while the other gets nothing because he has been prudent enough to make some provision for his old age. If, instead of receiving relief at his own home, a man were punished for his improvidence by being compelled to enter a workhouse, it would be felt that such a life was both disagreeable and discreditable. A most important deterrent influence upon voluntary pauperism would thus be brought into operation, and those who had secured independence for themselves by prudence would cease to feel that the recipients of relief were placed in a too favourable position. It is, however, scarcely necessary to substantiate our position by any general reasoning; the point we desire to establish is sufficiently proved by the extraordinary contrasts between the amount of pauperism in England and Scotland, with the amount existing in Ireland, where until lately in-door relief has alone been given.

Such facts as those previously mentioned, with regard to the abuses of out-door relief in London, seem to show that it cannot be administered in our large towns with any reasonable chance of detecting fraud and imposture. Thousands are assisted by the rates who ought not to be relieved, whilst thousands of the most deserving poor fail to obtain assistance. It is impossible to form a correct estimate of the characters of those who belong to so vast a population; comparatively few remain for any long time in the same

district. As, therefore, it is impossible to distinguish between the deserving and the undeserving, between those whose poverty is involuntary, and those who are poor simply because they are indolent and intemperate, it becomes the more important to administer all relief in such a form as will prevent any applying for it except those who are forced to do so by necessity. This difficulty of discovering the true character of the applicant for relief scarcely exists at all in the rural districts. In a country village the clergyman or some other resident has an accurate knowledge of the exact position of all the poor; but experience shows that the present state of public opinion is such as to render it just as mischievous to allow out-door relief in the country as in large towns. Few of the guardians can trace the ulterior consequences of any policy; if they can secure a small immediate reduction of the rates they are blind to any mischief which may afterwards ensue. Hence there will always be a willingness to grant out-door relief, because it is supposed that a pauper can be maintained at a less cost out of the workhouse than he can in it. Where these considerations, based upon false economy, do not prevail, other sentiments are sure to bring about the same result. The discredit which the poor attach to residence in a workhouse is often shared by those who administer the Poor Law; through a mistaken kindness the workhouse test is consequently applied as seldom as possible; the whole tone of public opinion prompts a liberal and lenient treatment of pauperism; for that

particular kind of improvidence by which it is mainly produced is not only sanctioned, but in some degree is practised, in all ranks of society. There is no probability that more onerous restrictions will be imposed upon those recipients of relief who have impoverished themselves by imprudent marriages, when those who have far better opportunities of knowing what is right and wrong receive pity instead of blame if they have a numerous family whom they cannot afford to maintain. A clergyman, for instance, whose conduct should be a guide to others, is an object of general sympathy if he has a small stipend and a very large family. Instead of being reproached for such imprudence it often secures him some mark of public favour. If an appointment is vacant the numerous family is at once used as a powerful canvassing argument, and people are supposed to be quite hard-hearted if they will not support one whose chief claim rests upon the fact that he has a family more numerous than he can afford to maintain.

Bad as such a state of public opinion is, few if any indications of improvement in its tone can be detected. It therefore becomes essential that those restrictions upon pauperism which were introduced into the New Poor Law should be made obligatory instead of permissive. There can be little doubt that the framers of the Act of 1834 assumed that the workhouse test would be much more generally applied. In many country districts a great majority of the paupers are out-door, whilst at the same time the workhouse is

perhaps not a quarter full. Selecting the Plomesgate Union, Suffolk, for no other reason except that from it I could readily obtain an accurate official return, it appears that the workhouse has accommodation for 442 paupers, at the present time it has only 92 inmates, whilst there are in this union no less than 1100 persons now receiving out-door relief. In such a case the argument could have little force that if all applicants were compelled to accept residence in the workhouse, a great addition to the rates will be required in order to obtain more extensive accommodation. In some districts it would no doubt happen that a temporary increase of expenditure would be incurred, either in building new workhouses, or in enlarging the old ones; but those who are opposed to such an outlay might have their objections removed by being reminded that in England pauperism represents a charge of about 6*s*. a head upon the whole population, whereas in Ireland, where little out-door relief is given, this charge is reduced to 3*s*. a head.

Another objection will probably be urged against the introduction of the Irish system into England. It may be said that the workhouse demoralizes those who dwell in it. Facts can be deduced which will prove that this allegation is not generally true; but even if it were so, it would indicate, not an inherent defect, but would merely show a faulty administration. There is no doubt that abuses have often occurred in workhouses, but the important point to be established is that such abuses can not only be controlled, but can

be eradicated by proper management. There may in some cases not be a judicious classification of in-door paupers; a great encouragement may be given to indolence if those who are able-bodied are treated with too much leniency. It is also most desirable that the able-bodied should be compelled to work, and thus as far as possible earn their own maintenance. The discipline enforced may be regulated according to the general character and circumstances of the individual inmates; those who have brought indigence upon themselves by their own vices should be subjected to a much more severe treatment than those whose poverty is due to misfortunes which they had no power to control. When the constant supervision which can be thus exercised over the recipients of in-door relief is contrasted with the impossibility of preventing abuses in the granting of out-door relief, the advantage which the former system has in checking pauperism at once becomes evident. All out-door paupers are treated alike; there is no chance of distinguishing the vicious from the unfortunate, and there is also no power of ascertaining whether the weekly allowance obtained from the parish is spent in self-indulgence, or is really required to provide the necessaries of life. Then again it constantly happens that those who are actually in the receipt of out-door relief are at the very time causing children to be born who will inevitably swell the future tide of pauperism; whereas in the workhouse none but aged couples are permitted to live together. As long as such a state of things continues we may still say

of our Poor Laws as was said of them by Malthus, that they create the distresses which they seek to alleviate.

Probably the best way to estimate the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two systems, is to trace the effects which each exerts upon the children who are brought under its influence. In all attempts to diminish poverty it should be borne in mind that there is no hope of attaining permanent results if children are reared under the same conditions as those which caused the impoverishment of their parents. The children of the out-door pauper are obviously not removed from any of the demoralization which usually accompanies indigence. They usually live in miserable courts and alleys; they are surrounded by vice and squalor. To the weekly parish allowance there is often added the spoils of successful begging, a business which the children are taught to follow from their tenderest years. As an illustration of the radically unsound doctrines prevailing with regard to parochial relief, it may be mentioned that Parliament has hitherto refused to impose upon the children of the out-door pauper the legislative control to which the children of industrious artisans are subjected. Thus, the principles of the Factory Acts have recently extended to every branch of industry except agriculture, and a promise has been given that agriculture will in a year or two cease to be thus exceptionally treated. When this promise has been fulfilled no child under a certain age will be permitted to work unless a certain amount of school attendance

can each week be certified. But the out-door pauper, who never perhaps attempts to do an hour's honest work, has no such restrictions imposed upon him; no trouble is taken to secure the education of his children; he still continues to receive his weekly allowance, although it may be notorious that his children never enter the school, but are each day sent into the streets to beg or steal. The training which the children of the in-door pauper receive offers a striking contrast to that which has been just described. The present Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, who may be regarded as one of the highest authorities on primary education, officially inspected the workhouse schools. He says: "It struck me that the condition of the workhouse schools very nearly approached the ideal of what elementary education in this country ought to be; perfectly in keeping with what the children's future career is likely to be." Mr. Tufnell, who has officially inspected many of these schools, says that in them the half-time system may be seen in its highest state of perfection. The children spend half the day at school, and the other half is devoted to industrial training. The school and the work seem mutually to assist each other; the children are relieved by the change, and their powers consequently become quickened. Hence it is said that they not only learn with more facility than those children who are at school all the day, but that also their industrial training is much better than is that of those children who spend their whole time at work. The result of the system is that instead of being trained

as paupers, they leave the workhouse with every chance of being able to maintain themselves by their own labour[1].

It would therefore seem, that whenever out-door relief is granted a dangerous force is called into existence which we have no power adequately to control. In-door relief, on the other hand, may be likened to a machine which is completely subject to our direction. A steam-engine may produce great havoc if those who superintend it are either unskilled or careless. Just in the same way, in-door relief may cause great mischief in the hands of unwise administrators. If the steam-engine is working too violently, the skilful engineer knows how to diminish its force; if in-door relief is giving too much encouragement to pauperism, it is easy at once to apply a suitable and sufficient check.

Having completed the comparison between the two systems of granting relief, one part of the problem still remains to be considered. We have to enquire what would be the effect of abolishing all Poor Laws, leaving the relief of distress entirely to private charity. In order to prevent confusion, it may be well to repeat that a comparison has not to be made between either the old or the new Poor Law, and a system based upon private charity. It can scarcely be necessary to remark, after what has been here stated, that in our opinion it would

[1] The favourable opinion here expressed of workhouse schools, applies more particularly to what are known as the separate schools, where the children are prevented from coming in contact with adult paupers.

be better to abolish the Poor Law than allow the present system to continue unaltered. Contemplating, therefore, the ultimate abolition of out-door relief, it remains for us to consider whether it would be better to continue the Poor Law thus amended, or, leaving the relief of distress to private charity, at once to declare that after duly providing for any vested interest no one shall possess a legal claim to be maintained.

It is proved by all experience that sympathy and compassion are such general characteristics of human nature that efforts will always be made to relieve the sufferings of the indigent. It has been shown in this and in other countries that where there is no Poor Law, or a Poor Law badly administered, a greater number of charitable institutions are called into existence, and private almsgiving is powerfully stimulated. Some idea may be formed of the consequences which would result from encouraging charity by observing the effects which are produced by charity even in those countries where there is a Poor Law. It has been often remarked that there will be found the greatest amount of pauperism in those localities where most is given away in private charity. We might point to many towns in this country which have been greatly impoverished by the endowments which have been left to be distributed in alms amongst the poor. London, however, probably affords the most striking example of the mischief which is often produced, when charity is administered through individuals, or through privately organised institutions. People cannot be ordinarily trusted to exercise due

caution in the bestowal of alms; those who have money to spare find it far more agreeable to give some of it away than to take the trouble carefully to investigate the purposes to which it is devoted. A man, for instance, by subscribing £1000 to some charitable society eases his conscience, and enjoys the pleasure of seeing his act of benevolence widely advertised. If our charitable institutions were closely scrutinised, few of them would be found to obey the maxim that those best deserve to be helped who have striven to rely upon self-help. It often happens that the most hypocritical obtain the largest share of private benefactions; those who are too independent to beg frequently remain unaided and unnoticed. It also usually occurs that the most earnest appeals for assistance are made on behalf of those who have committed some wilful act of improvidence. There is no one, for instance, who is supposed to have so strong a claim upon public sympathy as a man who has to maintain a wife and a very large family upon a small income. The aid afforded to such an individual is virtually a bribe to improvidence. If a more healthy tone of public opinion prevailed, society, instead of rewarding, would most severely condemn a man who brings children into the world without the means of adequately maintaining them.

It has been lately shown in a very able pamphlet by Dr Hawkesley, that the amount annually given away in charity in London is more than £5,000,000; scarcely any part of this sum rewards the frugal and the industrious; by far the largest portion of it, by being bestowed

upon the improvident, exerts a direct tendency to increase and perpetuate poverty. During last year the proprietors of the *Times* newspaper rendered a valuable service to the public by publishing a synopsis of a great number of London charities. Mr Hicks, who so ably conducted this investigation, carefully examined the accounts of some charities whose combined income exceeds £2,000,000 annually. Some of the facts he discloses are extremely startling. The accounts of many charitable societies are so loosely kept that they are absolutely worthless, and in many cases a great portion of the amount annually subscribed is expended in agency and in the cost of collection. The *Times* significantly remarks: "It must be considered, in fact, condemnatory of the whole system, that a quarter of the contributions of the public should be swallowed up in agency. The charity of the public is seen flowing on all sides, but there is no reservoir, no regular channel. The stream is dissipated in little rivulets, and wasted in innumerable small conduits."

It not unfrequently happens that through the superstition or vanity of some so-called benefactor various absurd and demoralizing conditions are imposed upon those who are the recipients of charitable endowments. In many places it will be found that some one, anxious to have his name recorded, or perhaps believing that he would thereby be more likely to obtain pardon for many shortcomings, leaves a certain sum to be distributed in bread and money amongst those who attend church. A bribe is thus offered to practise religion;

those who are too honest to be hypocritical, get nothing; it also often occurs that, tempted by these doles, poor old decrepit creatures are induced in all weathers to drag their weary limbs to church, many of them being almost too lame to walk, and too deaf to hear. With regard to the administration of these endowments, results almost equally unsatisfactory ensue. Never was there a more signal exposure of gross abuses than was made by the commission which examined into the Endowed Charities of this country. In too many cases it was proved that the trustees occupying influential social positions jobbed the property of the charities for the benefit of themselves and their relations; in other instances the charities were used for purposes of political corruption. All these abuses clearly show that charity will be seldom wisely administered; and, unless this can be secured, most of the worst evils attributed to the old Poor Law are inevitably brought into operation.

Such facts as those just adduced conclusively prove that it would be extremely mischievous still further to encourage the foundation of charitable institutions, or more powerfully to stimulate indiscriminate almsgiving. It is however absolutely certain that both these effects would ensue if the Poor Law were entirely abolished. As long as everyone has a right to claim maintenance, there may be some chance of checking reckless almsgiving. People who are producing mischief by ill-considered charity may be asked somewhat to control their generous impulses on the ground that no one need suffer the extremity of want, as the State, under certain proper regu-

lations, guarantees maintenance to all applicants. If, however, the State gave no such guarantee there would be nothing to prevent the relief of the poor being left entirely to the irresponsible and uncontrolled management of private individuals. All experience seems to show that the aggregate amount distributed in relief would be greatly increased if there were no Poor Law. It is often erroneously supposed that pauperism only afflicts old countries such as England; it is therefore instructive to observe what takes place in a new country, such as Australia. Its economic advantages are so great that it might be reasonably concluded that there would be no poverty to relieve; wages in Australia are so high, and the cost of living is so low, that the remuneration given to labour is certainly three or four times as great as that which labour receives in England. Yet, in spite of all this, it is found that the amount annually distributed in one of the most prosperous Australian Colonies, New South Wales, in the relief of the poor, represents a considerably larger tax imposed on each inhabitant than is imposed by the Poor Rate in Ireland. The latter amounts only to a charge of 3*s.* a head, whereas the former represents a charge of 3*s.* 11½*d.* on each inhabitant. In these colonies the Government subscribes to various charitable institutions, but in no way controls their management; the result is that much of the mischief is produced which has been attributed to unorganised charity. It seems to be now very generally admitted that the system not only encourages, but creates pauperism; vagrancy is said to be rapidly on the increase;

the Australian people are consequently loudly calling upon their Government to subject the relief of the poor to State supervision; in fact, they desire that the State should make itself responsible for the relief of indigence, or, in other words, that a Poor Law should be established. It is curious to remark that an increase in vagrancy appears to be one of the chief reasons why a Poor Law is demanded in Australia. It will be remembered that the rapid growth of vagrancy and mendicancy in England prompted the passing of various statutes as early as the reign of Henry VIII. and ultimately led to the Poor Law of Elizabeth, the main object of which was to subject the relief of indigence to State control.

Facts can also be adduced with regard to America, to prove that the agencies by which pauperism has been fostered in England will produce similar results in countries whose economic circumstances are much more favourable. Thus people often speak as if there were no poverty in the United States; the most popular remedy to get rid of our own paupers is to ship them off to America. The advocates of such a policy overlook the fact that the United States are beginning to be burdened with their own pauperism, and therefore would very probably object to be made the receptacle of the pauperism of the Old World. In some of the States the relief of the poor is left to private charity, whereas other States have a Poor Law so analogous to our own as to retain all its most striking defects. What is the result? The same agencies which generate pauperism in England are brought into operation in the United States, and it

is proved that they work with so much power as to exert a great influence in spite of the remarkable economic advantages possessed by the United States. Philadelphia may be regarded as the Manchester of America. A Poor Law is in operation there which permits the liberal granting of out-door relief; the consequence of this is that during the year 1869 there were 110,000 persons receiving out-door relief in Philadelphia, whereas the number of in-door recipients was only 9000. Australia and America consequently afford a striking corroboration in favour, not only of abolishing out-door relief, but they also show that it would be unwise and unsafe to leave the relief of the Poor entirely to unorganised charity.

Throughout these remarks the main object we have had in view has been to prove that one chief cause of poverty is that too much is done for those who make no proper effort to help themselves, and thus improvidence in its various forms is encouraged. But in direct antagonism to these opinions large sections of the public apparently think that a great deal more ought to be done for those who seek relief. A demand, influentially supported, has been made for State emigration; and amongst some working men ominous sounds are beginning to be heard that it is the duty of the State to find work for the unemployed. Those who advocate these opinions must consequently desire that the responsibility, perilous though it be, which is assumed in our Poor Law, is to be greatly extended; for not only is maintenance to be guaranteed to all applicants, but it is further desired that

the State should wholly or partly pay the travelling expenses of all who may desire to emigrate; it is also thought that the State should provide work at good wages whenever the labour-market is redundant, and employment is unduly scarce. Additions are constantly being made to the list of those things which people ought to do for themselves, but which they desire others to do for them. One of the latest examples is the demand which so many of the working-classes are now making that parents should not be required to pay for their children's education, but that all schools should be free. It will be found that these demands simply show how many there are who will always try to escape from the responsibility of their own acts. The extent to which they are permitted to do this will in no small degree determine the amount of poverty and misery which will exist in a country. Examining these demands in order, we will in the first place trace some of the consequences which would result from State emigration.

Allusion has already been made to the fact that pauperism is beginning to assume serious proportions in those countries which offer the greatest industrial advantages, such as Australia and the United States. These countries are no doubt anxious to receive all the independent labourers who choose to come; those who emigrate voluntarily have usually had the prudence to save, they generally are amongst the most enterprising and intelligent of their class, and consequently form a valuable addition to an industrial population. But Australia and America would surely protest if we ex-

ported to them a great mass of paupers, most of whom have brought poverty upon themselves by indolence and improvidence. The causes which had produced the indigence of these men would continue in operation, and would pauperise them in the new countries to which they were sent. Then again, the serious question arises, Who is to bear the cost of this State-emigration? It must be paid for either by local or imperial taxation. It is impossible to increase any local or imperial tax without some of the burden falling both directly and indirectly upon the working-classes; it would therefore happen, as can be clearly shown by a single example, that State-emigration has the same inherent vice as the Poor Laws; it would discourage providence, and encourage improvidence, it would tax the prudent in order to give help to the imprudent. Some hard-working artisan is, we will suppose, making a great effort to save sufficient to enable him and his family to emigrate; he lives carefully, and each year sets aside a small sum. Presently he finds that the State is spending a considerable amount in paying the expenses of emigration. The first result of this expenditure is that it requires either an additional tax to be imposed on some commodity of ordinary consumption, or local rates have to be increased. The artisan, because he has to contribute to this additional tax, or to this increased rate, is unable to save as large an amount as he previously could. It therefore may happen that the time when he will be able to emigrate must be postponed; and for whom has he to make this sacrifice? For those who probably have

had just as good opportunities of saving as he has had, but who obtain State-assistance, because they have been too indolent to work, or too improvident to save. What is the result sure to follow? A fatal check would at once be given to all attempts to emigrate by voluntary efforts; people who are willing to strive hard to provide their own passage-money would naturally say, why should we do this, when free passages are given to those who have brought indigence upon themselves through their own fault? It may, however, be urged that it is not alone paupers who would be assisted to emigrate, but that the same aid would be given to all applicants. Nothing could be more dangerous than such a policy. It would be offering a bribe to our best labourers and most skilled artisans to leave these shores. The sources of national wealth and power would be seriously impaired; and the country, thus rendered poorer, would have to bear a heavier burden of taxation.

Similar considerations will show that not less serious consequences would be involved if the demand were conceded which is beginning to be pressed by some representative working-men, that the State should find work for the unemployed. The adoption of such a policy would imply that work at remunerative wages should not only be given to every one who desired it, but should also be provided for all the additional numbers who might be called into being if all prudence with regard to marriage were ignored. The advocates of such a scheme should enquire from what source would the capital come which would be required to pay the

wages of those thus employed by the State. It may perhaps be thought that a Government always ought to be able to find some work upon which any surplus labour existing in the country might be profitably employed. But to show the fallacy of such an opinion it will be only necessary to enquire what is indicated by a scarcity of employment. It simply shows that the supply of labour exceeds the amount which capitalists believe they can profitably employ; when, therefore, individual employers cannot use all the existing labour to advantage, is it probable that the State will be able to do so? All experience proves that the State, from whom almost everyone thinks it is legitimate to get as much as possible, would have no chance of carrying on a successful industrial competition with the self-interest of the individual capitalist. Government departments are always notorious for waste, jobbery and extravagance. As there is every reason to conclude that the industry carried on by the State would be unremunerative, the Government could not find work for the unemployed without inevitably incurring a large addition to taxation. The annual loss involved in the scheme would rapidly augment; population would be powerfully stimulated; voluntary emigration would be checked, and the amount required to supply wages for the increasing number of applicants for work, would in time become far more than could be supplied by the resources of any country. Each year, as population was thus stimulated, food would increase in price, and the whole community would be more and more injured. If wages were not

advanced proportionately to the rise in the price of food the condition of all labourers would rapidly deteriorate. If, on the other hand, wages were raised, the labourers would indirectly suffer a not less serious loss; the profits of capital would be diminished; there would be a greater inducement to export capital; our own industry would be placed under a disadvantage compared with foreign competitors; our trade would be consequently jeopardized, and the result of the attempt of the Government finding work for the unemployed would inevitably be in the end to make employment far scarcer than it was before. Labour would be made vastly more redundant, whilst the supply of capital would be seriously diminished.

We will now refer to free education, the last of the three demands previously enumerated. This proposal did not assume any prominence in England until the recent discussions on National Education. It is now, however, strongly supported by many of the leaders of the working-classes. They argue that if there is an educational rate, everyone will contribute either directly or indirectly to it, and that consequently every parent will in this indirect way pay for the education of his children. It is further said that those who are opposed to free education always contemplate the carrying out of some scheme which will enable parents to be excused their children's school-pence if they can prove sufficient destitution. The advocates of free education, however, urge as an objection to such a scheme that these poor parents would be publicly stigmatised with the brand of pauperism. It is important to observe that those who

are in favour of free education are generally the most ardent friends of compulsion. Free and compulsory education has come to be the watchword of a party. It will therefore be useful, in the first instance, to ask if there can be any other justification for compulsion, but that the State considers that every child has a right to a certain amount of education; and that if he is deprived of this right it ought to be enforced on his behalf. Unless this is admitted it is impossible to defend the interference between parent and child which compulsion implies. Parents cannot justly be forced to give their children a certain amount of education, unless it is assumed that this education is as necessary for the mind as food and clothing are for the body. If a man cannot feed and clothe his children he is at once treated as a pauper; is it more unjust to fasten upon him the same character, if, having brought children into the world, he is unable to pay each week a few school-pence? Evils are not made less by concealing them in the garb of hypocrisy. A man who is unable to supply the necessary wants of his children, virtually confesses that he cannot discharge a responsiblity which he has voluntarily incurred; this is nothing more nor less than an admission of pauperism. The argument, however, upon which main reliance is placed rests upon the plea that even when education is free a man really pays for his children's schooling, because either directly or indirectly he contributes to the rates. The natural sequence to such reasoning would be that all children ought to be fed and clothed out of the rates, because the parents of the chil-

dren are compelled to aid in paying these rates. To show the folly of such a proposal it need only be remarked that improvidence would be so powerfully stimulated as to bring into operation with greatly intensified force all those mischievous agencies of the old Poor Law which so nearly inflicted ruin on England. But when it is said that the parents of the children pay the education rate, this is only partly true. "A workingman who had not considered that his present position justified him in marrying would have to contribute to the rate, and would therefore, though he had no children of his own, be compelled to pay for the schooling of the children of other people who had been less self-denying than himself. In the same way a married man with two children would have to pay for the education of the children of those parents who had 12 or 14. This argument is generally received with surprise by the advocates of free education. 'Oh,' they say, 'of course, but then the single man and the married man with a small family are just the right people to make contribute to the education rate; they can afford it so well.' It seems to be considered that the reward of restraint and prudence should be a heavy fine to defray the cost of the self-indulgence and improvidence of others. Will it ever be suggested that a rate should be levied on all classes of the community to pay the cost of drunkenness? The sober people could so well afford to contribute to it."—(Letter in the *Times*, Dec. 14, 1870. Mrs Fawcett.)

Many other proposals are often brought forward

which in a different way would seriously weaken the inducements to practise self-reliance and self-restraint. It is, for instance, frequently suggested that there should be a national poor-rate; or, in other words, that the cost of relieving the poor should cease to be a local charge, but should be defrayed out of the national exchequer. In order to prove the mischief which would be produced by such a scheme, it is only necessary to remark that it would remove all effectual checks upon extravagant administration. The most ardent friends of economy never object to put their hands into the imperial treasury and take out as much as they can for the benefit of themselves and their neighbours. A constituency frequently returns to Parliament one who is constrained to pledge himself to scrupulous economy, and yet nothing will give him such safe possession of his seat as securing the expenditure of public money amongst his constituents. It is always easy to be generous at other people's expense, and indigence would be relieved with profuse liberality if the necessary means were provided, not by the locality, but by the whole nation. It is therefore evident that from a national poor-rate the two following consequences would result. In the first place, the aggregate amount spent would be greatly increased, and therefore the burden of taxation would become more severe. In the second place, a much more serious evil would ensue than is simply represented by this addition to taxation. A more liberal administration of relief would give new force to all those agencies to which indigence is due; the profession of pauperism would

offer increased attractions to the indolent and the improvident; life in a workhouse might yield far more comfort than is ordinarily enjoyed by the independent labourer; and out-door relief, administered with much greater recklessness than at present, would afford a premium to idleness, and would provide a much larger income for old age and sickness than the ordinary workman could hope to procure by steady saving. For these reasons we think it impossible too strongly to condemn the proposal for a national rate. For a long time it was a principle of the Poor Law that each parish should be responsible for the support of its own poor. A parish consequently became a distinct area of rating. There are obviously many advantages and also many disadvantages associated with such an arrangement. In enumerating the advantages particular stress should be laid upon the fact that economical administration is much more likely to be ensured when the area of rating is small than when it is large. The conditions on which relief is obtained are sure to become much more easy and agreeable to the recipients, if those who administer the Poor Law only have in the first instance to bear a small part of the additional expenditure consequent on treating pauperism with greater liberality. The objections which have been urged against a national rate apply to a certain extent to all proposals for increasing the area of rating. There are, however, many counterbalancing considerations to be urged on the other side. A great hardship from which many labourers for a long time suffered was traceable to the area of

rating being restricted to a parish. It not unfrequently happened that if all the land of a parish were owned by a few proprietors, they entered into a combination and agreed to pull down almost every cottage on their estates. In this way they freed their land from poor rates, and the burden of supporting the poor whom they employed was thrown upon the neighbouring district. Not only were landlords in this way often able to shift a charge upon others which properly belonged to themselves, but a cruel wrong was inflicted on their labourers. Driven off the land they were often compelled to walk three or four miles to their work. This abuse has been to a considerable extent remedied by a Bill passed in 1865, known as the Union Chargeability Act. By this measure the area of rating is now no longer a parish, but embraces a union which generally comprises many parishes.

It is however usually supposed that the greatest benefit resulting from this act is due to the circumstance that it has produced more equalisation in rating. It certainly seems unjust that there should be such great inequalities in rating as exist, for instance, in different parts of London. In districts which are inhabited almost entirely by the rich, the poor rates are merely nominal. In other localities where the poor chiefly reside the rates are so heavy as to make many paupers who might otherwise be able to maintain themselves. In the year 1868—9, the rate for the relief of the poor varied in the different metropolitan parishes, from 3*s.* 7½*d* in the £ in Bethnal Green, to 8¾*d.* in the £ in

Paddington. The system manifestly tends to widen the gulf which separates the rich from the poor. More and more they live apart, and know less of each other either as friends or neighbours. With each extension of the area of rating, rates will be more equalised, and there will be less inducement for the rich to separate themselves from the poor. This advantage, however, it should be always most carefully borne in mind, is necessarily accompanied with the drawback of a more lax and extravagant administration; if the rates are drawn from a more extended area each individual does not feel himself so much interested in economy being practised in his particular locality. The problem therefore to be solved is this, to secure as much equalisation as possible with the smallest amount of relaxation of the checks upon careless and extravagant administration. Something was done towards the solution of this problem by an act which was passed by Mr. Göschen, President of the Poor Law Board, during the session of 1870. The Act provided that the cost of in-door relief in each metropolitan union should be borne by a common metropolitan rate; whereas the cost of out-door relief should continue to be, as it is now, a charge upon each parish or union. The result of this arrangement will be that guardians will be interested in as far as possible checking the latter form of relief. Each district will have to pay the entire cost of its out-door paupers, but will only have to pay a small portion of the cost of in-door paupers. The collateral advantage thus associated with the Act was scarcely noticed either

by Parliament or the public. It may prove to be of so much importance as to cause the principle of the measure to be extended to each county.

Out-door relief might thus throughout the country be greatly curtailed; the benefit resulting might educate the public to demand the complete abolition of the system of out-door relief. In such an event it is evident that the entire cost of pauperism would be borne by each county. This would be far too wide an area of rating to secure adequate economy of administration. It would therefore be necessary again to make the cost of pauperism in part a local or parochial charge.

Before leaving the subject of the equalization of rates it will be necessary to make a few remarks upon the much debated question whether poor rates and other local charges ought to continue to be levied as they are now, solely upon such real property as land, dwelling-houses, and trade-premises. The point could not be adequately considered without entering into a detailed discussion of the principles of taxation. It is not our intention to do this, as it would be foreign to the immediate subject of these pages. It will, however, be requisite as far as possible to trace the effects which may be exercised upon pauperism by any proposals for altering the property from which poor rates are levied.

The injustice of confining these charges solely to real property is frequently assumed to be so self-evident as to admit of scarcely any difference of opinion; there are, however, some counterbalancing considerations

which certainly should not be neglected. In the first place, it is to be remarked that poor rates, if they were levied upon personal property, would virtually constitute an income tax. The fundamental objection to an income tax is that it is imposed upon savings, and not upon expenditure, and consequently the more prudent a man is the more heavily he is fined. This objection is serious when an income tax is imposed for imperial purposes, but it would be much more serious if the proceeds of the tax were devoted to the relief of the poor. The greatest evil associated with the imposition of rates for the relief of the poor arises from the fact that the provident are taxed in order and to aid the improvident; this objection would become much intensified if the tax were directly imposed upon savings, because then a man would contribute in direct proportion to his prudence. It must be also remembered when landowners so loudly complain of personal property being exempted from poor rates, that the same circumstances which promote pauperism confer a benefit on the owners of land. It has been frequently pointed out that the undue increase of population is the most powerful of all causes in promoting pauperism. One of the inevitable consequences of an excessive population is that the resources of the country are severely strained in order to obtain the requisite supply of food. The competition for land becomes more intense, the margin of cultivation descends, and rents consequently rise; this rise in rents is also assisted by a reduction in wages arising from

the labour market being overstocked. No one can, for instance, doubt that there would be a great advance in rents if an increase of 50 per cent. were suddenly added to our population; it is, however, equally certain that such an addition to our numbers would cause a great augmentation in pauperism and would seriously depress the general condition of the people.

Farmers generally suppose that the rating question concerns them as much or even more than it does the landowners; they have often made a similar mistake before. It will be shown, when considering the incidence of rates, that although they are often paid by the farmers, yet they really come out of the pockets of the landowners; for if the farmer had to pay no rates he would sooner or later have to pay so much more in rent. Again, it must be remembered that at the present time personal property indirectly contributes a very considerable amount to poor rates; it will be hereafter proved that local taxation, imposed on trade premises, raises the price of many commodities, and consequently the tax is paid by the consumers of these commodities, who amongst others are the owners of personal property.

An objection, however, of a different kind, and one of much greater importance, applies to the schemes which are usually proposed for exempting real property from a portion of its present liability to local taxation. The favourite method of giving effect to such an exemption is to propose that a part, say one-half, of such a local charge as the cost involved in supporting the

poor, should be contributed by the Consolidated Fund, or from some other source of imperial taxation. Two arguments are generally advanced in support of such an arrangement. In the first place, it would lessen the existing inequalities in the amount of local taxation imposed in different districts; and secondly, it would cause such personal property as an income derived from the funds directly to contribute to poor rates and other local charges. At one time I attributed much greater weight to these arguments than I now do, fully admitting the desirability of more nearly equalizing the rates, if this could be done without weakening the guarantees for economy; yet with regard to the second argument reasons have just been stated which seem to shew that it would be of doubtful expediency to levy rates from personal property. But the consideration of by far the most importance arises from the circumstance that each contribution obtained for local purposes, either from the Consolidated Fund or from any other source of imperial taxation, would, *pro tanto*, promote extravagance, and would thus encourage pauperism. It will, however, throw much additional light on the subject if we trace the incidence of local taxation; we shall then know by whom such charges as poor rates are really paid, and we shall more clearly understand the injury and injustice inflicted upon the industrious labourer, who is compelled to subscribe a considerable sum to parochial relief.

As previously stated, rates are levied on agricultural land, trade premises, and dwelling-houses. In order

to trace the incidence of rates there are consequently three cases to be investigated; first with regard to rates imposed upon agricultural land, it is customary for them to be paid by the farmer; hence it is often supposed that their incidence falls upon him. It can, however, be easily proved that rates represent so much deducted from rent, and consequently they are a charge, not upon the farmer but upon the landlord. Suppose a farmer to pay £1000 a year in rent, and in addition £200 a year in rates; and that some change is introduced by which the rates are reduced by one-half. If the farmer is a tenant at will, the saving resulting from the reduction of rates can immediately be appropriated by the landowner; it is obvious that the farmer can now afford to pay exactly £100 a year more in rent, for he would be just as well off whether he paid £1000 a year rent, and £200 a year rates, or if he paid £1100 in rent, and £100 in rates. If the farm is on a lease, the farmer is able to appropriate to himself, until the lease expires, the whole advantage arising from the reduced rates; but at the expiration of the lease the rent is adjusted in accordance with the reduced rates. It therefore appears that, sooner or later, any reduction in the rates will be appropriated by the landlord; conversely, an increase of rates would sooner or later be paid by the landowners. Hence, in the case of agricultural land, the rates are really contributed by the owner, and not by the cultivator of the soil. It seems strange that this simple conclusion should, on a recent noteworthy oc-

casion, be entirely lost sight of by our leading statesmen. The surplus funds of the disestablished Irish Church were in part to be devoted to the reduction of the county cess, a local rate imposed upon land. This was to be done with the express object of benefiting the small Irish farmers. If the scheme had been carried out these farmers would in the end have got nothing, whereas the landowners would have received a very valuable present.

It is somewhat more difficult to investigate the second case, and trace the incidence of rates imposed upon business premises. If the rates on trade premises were uniform throughout the country they would be a uniform charge upon capital invested in industry. The effect of such a charge would be two-fold. It would reduce the rate of profit, and increase the price of commodities. Any charge imposed upon home industry increases the advantage of investing capital abroad. An influence would thus be brought into operation to increase the amount of capital exported when compared with the amount retained for home industry. This would diminish national wealth, and by lessening the capital retained for home investments, would cause a reduction in the average rate of wages. Such a tax upon industry would moreover increase the price of commodities; this rise in price would be greatest with regard to those commodities which cannot be imported. If the poor-rate is not uniform, the industry of those districts where the rates are most onerous, will be placed in a peculiarly disadvantageous

position. The burden will be borne partly by the employers, and partly by the employed. A trade when subject, in a particular locality, to an exceptional tax, can only continue to be carried on by the employers consenting to accept less than the average rate of profit, and by workmen consenting to accept less than the average wages. The present depression of the ship-building trade on the Thames is no doubt to a great extent due to the heavy rates which have long been imposed in the east of London.

It is a more complicated problem to trace the incidence of rates levied upon dwelling-houses. There are in this case three persons to be considered,—the owner of the land upon which the house is built, the builder, and the occupier. It is manifest that the rates cannot fall upon the builder. He obtains upon his outlay, including the price which he pays for the land, just such a return as will secure the average rate of profit upon the capital expended. The competition of capital, on the average of years, determines that neither a larger nor a smaller profit than this is secured. The owner of a house will of course suffer a loss if rates are raised after the house has been built. This will be especially the case if the advance is so partial that it does not extend throughout the locality. In enquiring whether rates are borne by the owner of the land upon which a house is built, or by the occupier, it may be assumed that a uniform rate prevails throughout the whole country. The principles which regulate the value or rent of

building-land are analogous to those which determine the rent of the land devoted to agriculture. In the latter case rent is regulated by two circumstances—fertility of soil, and convenience of situation. The latter is alone operative in determining the value of building land. All countries possess land varying greatly in productiveness. Some land yields a high rent; other land is so barren or so inconveniently situated that it yields only a nominal rent. In a similar way some land is so conveniently situated for building purposes that it possesses a monopoly value. Other land has so few advantages of situation that it is not more valuable for building than for agriculture. This land may be regarded as being on the margin of building; just in the same way as agricultural land, which only yields a nominal rent, is on the margin of cultivation. The rent which is paid for any building land is consequently composed of two elements, viz. its agricultural value, and the value which arises from the superior convenience of the situation of the land which is just on the margin of building.

It is evident that the rent which is paid for any particular house partly represents the rent of the land upon which it is built, and partly a return upon the capital expended in building the house. The relative magnitude of these two elements which compose the rent of a house varies with its situation. If it possesses great convenience of situation, the land may be more valuable than the house which is built upon it. In ordinary cases, however, the rent which is paid for the ground is a very

much smaller sum than the amount which represents a return for the outlay involved in building the house. Bearing this analysis in mind, it is evident that when rates are levied upon a house, they may be regarded as partly levied upon the rent of the land upon which the house is built, and partly upon the profit annually yielded to the capital spent in building the house. That portion of the rates which is levied upon the rent of the land is a charge upon the landowner. The rent, as above shown, represents the price paid for convenience of situation, and if no rates were levied upon the occupiers, they could afford to pay a higher price for convenience of situation. This portion of the rate consequently subtracts so much from the value of a natural monopoly, and the charge falls with as much certainty on the landowner as when rates are levied upon agricultural land. The remaining portion of the rates, which is imposed upon the amount representing a return to the capital expended in building the house, is manifestly paid by the occupier. It cannot, as before said, have been paid by the builder, because, by the competition of capital, he must obtain the ordinary rate of profit upon his outlay. In certain exceptional cases a portion of the rates may fall upon the owner of the house. Thus he would be injured if there were a local and not a general advance in rates. On the other hand, he would undoubtedly secure some advantage, if there were a reduction of rates in the particular locality in which his house happened to be situated. From this investigation it appears that, with the exception just

alluded to, rates are really paid partly by the occupier of the house, and partly by the owner of the land upon which the house is built. It therefore follows, that when houses are built in ordinary situations the greater portion of the rates falls upon the occupier. But when houses are erected upon sites which possess great value from their situation, a considerable portion of the rates is a charge upon the owner of the land.

The conclusions just arrived at must be somewhat modified, if it is assumed that rates vary in different districts of the same locality. Suppose houses of the same character are built in two adjoining parishes upon land which possesses equal convenience of situation, and that the rates are much higher in the one parish than in the other. The difference in the rates prevailing in the two parishes will be a charge upon the land. In such a case the difference in rates may be considered as one of the elements upon which convenience of situation depends; therefore the parish in which the high rates prevail may be really regarded as less conveniently situated than the adjoining parish; consequently the land in the former parish will yield for building purposes a smaller rent; in fact, the difference between the rent paid in one parish and that paid in the other, must be equivalent to the difference in the rates. It therefore follows that the portion of the rates borne by the owners of the land on which houses are built, is in certain cases increased, when the rates prevailing throughout the locality are not uniform. From these investigations it appears, contrary to opinions fre-

quently expressed, that a great portion of the rates imposed on trade premises are really paid by the working classes, and that in ordinary cases the chief part of the rates levied upon dwelling-houses is contributed by the occupier. These conclusions afford an additional illustration of the danger incurred if rates are permitted to increase. The additional burden imposed upon industry may seriously imperil many important branches of trade, employment will be curtailed, and wages will be reduced. Then, again, with regard to rates levied upon dwelling-houses, how many tens of thousands there are who, in order to maintain their independence, have to carry on a severe and a continuous struggle! Cast upon them an additional burden, and the struggle will often be relinquished. Pauperism thus engenders pauperism, and the process goes on with accumulating force. This is no imaginary description; by the old Poor Law pauperism instead of being checked, was encouraged, and England was brought to the brink of ruin. The same causes which worked with such disastrous effect are not yet exterminated, they are deep seated in human nature; remove the checks which keep them under some restraint, and they are as certain to sweep onwards as the pent-up river when the sluice-gates are removed.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE BOARDING-OUT OF PAUPER CHILDREN.

Whilst these pages were being written, the Poor Law Board issued an order relating to the boarding-out of pauper children, which affords striking evidence that there is a danger of the country at any moment returning to some of the worst evils of the old Poor Law. What makes the matter the more serious is that the order has met with the strong approval of the public, and has been unanimously praised by the press. No one has pointed out the encouragement which it will give to improvidence, to immorality, and to other social vices; no one has objected to it on the ground that it rewards the imprudent at the expense of the thrifty. It has simply been considered in relation to the effect it will have upon the children who are boarded out, and not a moment's attention has been given to any ulterior consequences. A brief description of the leading provisions of the order will, I think, prove that it will introduce far greater evils than it will cure; and that it will exercise a demoralizing influence which will most powerfully promote the future increase of pauperism.

The order contemplates that children who are boarded out should be sent to healthy country homes; the greatest care is to be shown in selecting the foster-parents to whose charge they are intrusted; these foster-parents may receive 4*s.* a week for each child, exclusive of school-fees and medical attendance, which are also pro-

vided by the guardians. Besides this they allow 10*s.* a quarter for clothes. If the children are ill an extra allowance is given in order that they may have nourishing food. None of these pauper children must live in a house where there is an adult lodger. When the child is more than seven, he must not sleep in the same room with a married couple. Children who are thus boarded out must be between the ages of two and ten, and so solicitously is their welfare to be guarded, that there must be an identity of religious faith between the foster-parents and the child. The Poor Law authorities omit, however, to point out the mode of discovering the religious faith of a deserted baby of two years old. In addition to all these provisions on behalf of the children, it is further enacted, that in every case they should be under the direct supervision of a local committee, by whom they should be periodically visited. It is evidently contemplated that this committee would usually consist of benevolent ladies in the locality, who, by a hundred little acts of kindness would try to make the life of these pauper children as agreeable as possible.

No one can deny that the Poor Law Board, by adopting the arrangements just described, has done everything in its power to make the life of these children as desirable as possible. A sufficient supply of good food is granted to them; their schooling is paid for, and their education is secured; efficient medical attendance is to be promptly provided; they are to be well housed, and comfortably clothed; and the benevolence of the locality is summoned to watch over their interests, and to pro-

tect them against any neglect or unkindness on the part of their foster-parents. Children thus treated will have every chance of doing well in life; they will be better educated, and will be brought up under conditions more conducive to health than the majority of the children of the working-classes. It is therefore at once concluded that a system which does so much to promote the future welfare of children ought to be encouraged as much as possible. This is one way of regarding the subject, and it seems to be the only point of view from which it has been regarded by the Poor Law authorities, and by the majority of the public. The question, however, ought to be looked upon in another aspect, which will present very different considerations.

This boarding-out system, it is important to observe, is only to be applied to the following children: first, orphans; second, illegitimate children, deserted by the mother; third, legitimate children, deserted by both parents; fourth, legitimate children, deserted by one parent, and the other parent being either dead, mentally incapacitated, in prison, or out of England.

Bearing in mind what children are permitted to be boarded out, we will proceed to compare the circumstances of one of these with the life which the child of an ordinary English labourer is usually obliged to lead. In the first place it is to be remarked, that nearly 5*s.* a week is expended upon the maintenance of each child who is boarded out; this does not include the amount which is spent either in paying school fees, or in supplying medical attendance. We do not intend to assert

that this represents too large a sum for the maintenance of a child, but this vitally important question is at once suggested—How many working-men in this country, when they have to support an average-sized family, are able to earn sufficient to devote 5*s.* a week to the maintenance of each of their children, besides paying for their education and for all requisite medical attendance? Five shillings represents half the weekly earnings of many an agricultural labourer, and out of these earnings he has very probably to maintain himself, his wife, and three or four children. The boarding-out system would therefore bring home this extraordinary result to a considerable portion of our labouring population, that a man would receive quite as much for the support of two pauper children as he is able to earn by hard toil. Could anything more powerfully tend far and wide to spread the feeling that pauperism is such a desirable profession that the children of the pauper are far better off, and have a far greater chance of doing well in life, than the children of the man who tries to do all that can be done by hard work for his family? The following case, which is no imaginary one, will bring out the point with greater distinctness. A man who is well known in the neighbourhood in which he lives as a thoroughly good, honest, and industrious labourer, has been employed on the same farm for many years, and his wages have been regularly 12*s.* a week. His wife being a cleanly, industrious woman, they are just the people who would be selected by a local committee to take charge of pauper children. As all their own family have now obtained

situations away from home, they would have suitable accommodation for at least three pauper children; the man and his wife would receive about 14*s.* 6*d.* a week for feeding, clothing, and housing these children. The sum may be put down as at least 15*s.* a week when it is remembered that education and medical attendance are provided. The man and his wife had for many years to keep four children of their own; these children, not being old enough to earn anything for themselves, and the mother's time being fully occupied with home duties, it of course followed that this man had only the wages which he was able to earn, and these we have stated to be 12*s.* a week to keep himself, his wife, and his four children. The pauper children would not only be better off than the labourer's own children, but the pauper children would actually have secured to them for their maintenance a sum exceeding by 25 per cent. the amount which the labourer was able to obtain for the support of himself, his wife and his family. Even this statement, however, does not present the contrast in its strongest light. The money devoted to the support of the pauper children is guaranteed; it is independent of all vicissitudes of trade, and of all casualties with regard to health. The labourer who supports his own family may be thrown out of work through employment being scarce; some branch of industry may be paralysed by a war or by over-speculation, and tens of thousands may be thrown out of work. Then, again, if the labourer's health should fail, he and his family may any week be deprived of half their usual income. All these consi-

derations indisputably prove that the proposed system of boarding out pauper children will not only make a great number of the most industrious and hard-working men and women feel that they could never do half as much for their own children as is done for these pauper children; the whole country will in fact be told that parents, by deserting their children, will secure for them an amount of physical comfort and other advantages which probably could in no other way be procured. We will proceed to consider separately the different classes of children to whom the system is intended to apply, and then we shall be able more clearly to appreciate the reward that will be conferred upon improvidence, and the stimulus which will be given to immorality.

First, the system may be applied to orphan children, and this case suggests by far the strongest arguments in favour of adopting the principle of boarding-out. The children themselves, as previously admitted, might very possibly be benefited; any advantages, however, which might thus arise, would in our opinion be far more than counterbalanced by the circumstance that parents would be encouraged by a pecuniary bribe to neglect an important part of the obligation which they owe to their children. A man who incurs the responsibility of causing children to be born is not only bound to maintain these children while he is living, but is also bound to make a provision for them in the event of his death. To the neglect of these obligations is due a great part of all the misery and poverty which now exist. Under the boarding-out system the working-classes would not only have

no adequate inducement to make a provision for their children, but would feel that it was rather for the interest of their children that they should not attempt to do so. There are few working-men who can have any reasonable chance of saving sufficient to make their children as well off as if they were boarded out upon the terms previously described. The first maxim, therefore, enforced by this order of the Poor Law Board, is that the working-classes will act foolishly if they attempt by life insurance to make any provision for their children.

The next class to whom the order applies are illegitimate children who have been deserted by their mother. An account has already been given of the encouragement afforded to illegitimacy by the Old Poor Law; a far greater premium, however, is offered to illegitimacy by the arrangement now adopted for the boarding-out of pauper children; the parents of illegitimate children will now know that if the mother will only consent to desert her offspring they will be far better off than legitimate children of hard-working labourers. Where, for instance, is the agricultural labourer who can spend 5*s.* a week upon each of his children, and who can get the best medical attendance provided for them gratuitously, with an abundance of nourishing food in the case of illness? It is impossible to devise any scheme which will more fatally undermine the morality of a community; every hard-working married couple will know that it is impossible for them to provide for their children as good food, as good clothes, and as much general comfort as are secured at the expense of society to the children begotten

in vice and prostitution. A man, as the result of an immoral connection, becomes the father of three children; he then only has to persuade the mother to desert these children, and an income is immediately guaranteed for their maintenance considerably exceeding the amount which labourers are often able to earn for the support of themselves and their families. Such an arrangement, in the encouragement which it will give to illegitimacy, is far worse than anything contained in the Old Poor Law. It should be remembered that this boarding-out system is an importation from Scotland; there it has been in operation for many years, and it is notorious that in spite of the religious zeal of the Scotch there is far more illegitimacy in that country than in any other part of the United Kingdom. In Scotland 10 per cent. of all the births are illegitimate; in England the proportion is only 6 per cent., and in Ireland only 3 per cent.

Another comment must be made upon the mode by which it is proposed to provide for illegitimate children. It is particularly worthy of remark that the privilege of boarding-out is only to be enjoyed by the illegitimate children who have been deserted by their mother; if the man deserts the woman whom he has ruined, she must maintain her children, or become a pauper herself. In the present state of the labour-market a woman will have to work very hard to earn as much as is allotted to the support of one child who is boarded out; therefore, if she is anxious to promote the welfare of her children, she has every inducement to follow the father's example, and desert them also.

The third class to whom the scheme of boarding-out applies are those legitimate children who have been deserted by both their parents. Anyone who is practically acquainted with the poor must know of hundreds of instances where, from employment being precarious or from the labour-market being overstocked, a man has not on the average more than 9*s.* or 10*s.* a week, to maintain himself, his wife, and four young children. It will henceforward be almost the duty of persons who are thus circumstanced to desert their children, because by the adoption of such a course the welfare of these children will be greatly promoted. In what way, for instance, can a man with only 10*s.* a week bring up a family in such a place as London? He would have to pay as much as 3*s.* or 4*s.* a week for two rooms. It will therefore be almost sure to happen that the whole family will herd together in one room. Instead of each child having 5*s.* a week for its maintenance, not more than 1*s.* or 1*s.* 6*d.* can possibly be spared for its food and clothing. In the event of one of the children falling ill, the father will not be able promptly to provide the best medical advice, and what chance is there that the child will obtain a suitable supply of the nourishing food he may most require? In all probability, unless the child has an unusually strong constitution, it will pine away for want of proper food and of wholesome air. The order of the Poor Law Board seems calculated to enforce this lesson upon every parent whose children are living in such squalor and misery as that just described:—Desert your children, and their condition will at once become everything that can

be desired; instead of living in a single room in a dreary court or alley, they will be transferred to some healthy country home, where they will sleep in well ventilated rooms, where they will be provided with an ample supply of wholesome and nourishing food, where they will be well clothed, receive a good education, be carefully tended in illness; and finally, the most benevolent ladies in the locality will enter into an undertaking to watch over them with kindly and constant interest. Can there be any justification of a policy which offers to the majority of the poor of a country a strong pecuniary inducement to desert their children? It is impossible to conceive anything which is more unjust or which will more discourage providence and every social virtue, than the adoption of a scheme which will make every virtuous hardworking man and woman feel that they must struggle on unaided and unrecognized, but that society will do everything that liberality and benevolence can suggest for the children of those who either live in vice, or who neglect every parental duty.

Before the boarding-out system is generally adopted the country would do well to consider what may possibly be the future outlay it will entail upon the community. It seems to be tacitly assumed by the Poor Law authorities that it will lead to no increased expenditure, because the cost of boarding-out a child is certainly not greater than the average cost of maintaining children in a workhouse. But such reasoning is altogether fallacious. The boarding-out system, by offering a premium upon illegitimacy and desertion, must inevitably greatly increase the

number of pauper children. The tendency of the system will certainly be to make people feel that society will do everything that will be required for their children; many of the most effective prudential checks upon population will be removed, for if parents find their children in the slightest degree burdensome to them, all that they have to do is to desert them, and at the same time they will have the satisfaction of knowing that the children will be as well cared for as the most anxious parent can desire. The result will be that the cost of pauperism will be augmented, and population will be greatly stimulated; two agencies will thus be brought into operation which will still further depress the condition of the labourer. He would have to contribute a greater amount to the rates, and the additional rates would prejudicially affect the industry from which he earns his livelihood. Then, again, if population were stimulated all the circumstances which are most antagonistic to his welfare would work with intensified force; the labour-market would become still more overstocked than it is now, and wages would decline. The increased number that would have to be fed would produce a rise in the price of food, and he would consequently find that not only were his wages reduced, but he would also have to pay more for every article that he might purchase. The hardworking independent labourer would moreover know that all these additional difficulties with which he had to contend were not unavoidable misfortunes, but were brought upon him by a spurious philanthropy and a mischievous benevolence which are ever striving to reward the vicious

and the improvident at the expense of the thrifty and industrious.

It will no doubt be said by the supporters of the boarding-out system, that it is intended to benefit the child, and not to relieve the parent from a just responsibility. But the proposals of the Poor Law Board provide no security whatever against the parent wilfully escaping from the responsibility of maintaining his child. Not only is no care taken to prevent him doing so, but, as previously stated, the whole scheme, by placing the boarded-out child in an exceptionally favourable position, is directly calculated to encourage desertion.

It will also be probably urged in defence of the scheme that the boarded-out children, by being isolated from the contamination of adult paupers, will be much less likely to sink into pauperism in after life. If this isolation could be secured in no other way except by the boarding-out system, we might then be prepared to admit that the welfare of the children ought to be secured, even at the price of encouraging many vices and much demoralization in their parents. But the hypothesis is quite untenable; it is based on the assumption that a deserted or orphan child, if not boarded out, must become an inmate of a workhouse, and must associate with adult paupers. Allusion has, however, previously been made to what are known as the separate pauper schools, in which children are educated and kept entirely apart from the adult inmates of a workhouse. The education which is given in these schools is admitted to be excellent, and the Poor Law authorities confess that the children do

remarkably well in after life, if the slightest care is taken to start them in any suitable employment. It is objected that these institutions fail to supply all the influence of a good home; but we believe it is, for the reasons we have stated, impossible to supply this influence without placing these pauper children in a position so exceptionally favourable as to give a disastrous encouragement to illegitimacy, desertion, and other vices.

The chief object we have had in view in making these remarks is to show that the administration of the Poor Law should be regarded with the most constant watchfulness. Those who resist the attempts of an unwise philanthropy and of a mistaken benevolence to relax the checks upon pauperism, are sure to incur the reproach of being hard-hearted; they may, however, console themselves with the reflection that their conduct cannot be either cruel or wrong if they strive to prevent the vicious and the improvident being still more liberally relieved at the expense of the thrifty and the industrious.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE INCREASE OF POPULATION.

In the previous chapters repeated allusion has been made to the evils which result from causes which produce an undue increase of population. The subject is one which peculiarly requires plain speaking; it is surrounded with an almost impenetrable mass of prejudice. With confidence, however, it can be asserted, that if in a country like England the possible increase of population is not adequately restrained by prudential habits, the general condition of the nation will become more and more unsatisfactory; and pauperism will assume more formidable proportions.

Unless the generally recognised principles of economic science are a tissue of fallacies, it can be easily shown that no scheme of social improvement can be of permanent efficacy if it is unaccompanied by an increased development of providence amongst the general mass of the people. The truth of this is proved in a very striking manner by considering the effects which

have resulted from free trade. If anyone refers to the speeches which were made during the anti-Corn-Law agitation by the prominent advocates of the movement, he will find that the most glowing anticipations were indulged in with regard to the consequences which would result from the abolition of protection. Mr W. J. Fox, who was perhaps at one time the most distinguished orator of the party, when addressing a large meeting in Covent Garden Theatre asserted that the abolition of protection would exterminate pauperism; and he predicted that in a few years the ruins of the workhouses would mark the extinction of protection just in the same way as the ruins of the baronial castles mark the destruction of feudalism. Nearly a quarter of a century has now elapsed since the adoption of free trade in corn, and the present state of London, with its 160,000 paupers, is a cruel comment upon these prophecies. But how is it that what so many confidently expected has so entirely failed to come to pass? The advocates of free trade did not miscalculate the more immediate consequences which would result from carrying out the principle. The average price of bread was considerably reduced. Many articles of general consumption, such as tea and sugar, became much cheaper, and there was an extension of our commerce and trade which must have exceeded all expectations. In a few years the exports and imports of this country were nearly trebled. Almost simultaneously with the passing of free trade another agency was brought into operation calculated greatly to promote national prosperity. The development of the railway system then

commenced, and the greatest improvement in the means of locomotion that had ever been introduced was rapidly spread over the country.

If anyone, a quarter of a century since, could have foreseen all that was about to take place; if he could have known that trade was soon to be trebled, that railways would be taken to almost every small town in the kingdom; would it not have appeared absolutely incredible that all these favourable agencies should have produced so little effect, that it may now be fairly disputed whether the poverty of the poor has been perceptibly diminished? There has no doubt been an unprecedented accumulation of wealth, but this wealth has unhappily been so distributed that the rich have become much richer, whilst the poor have remained as poor as they were before. That this would be the case was foreshadowed by many distinguished economists. Mr Malthus had said that "nothing can permanently improve the condition of the poor but increased prudence in marriage; unless you have this, improvements in other respects are of very little consequence. Under the best government imaginable there may be thousands upon thousands starved." He further remarks that annual parliaments, universal suffrage, the abolition of all taxes, the sweeping away of pensions, and the reduction of the Civil List to £1500 a year, would cause no permanent reduction in pauperism if there were no increased providence with regard to marriage. Mr Mill, in his work on Political Economy, conclusively proves that no reduction of the price of food, brought about either by agricultural improvements or by free

trade, can permanently prevent a deterioration in the condition of the human race, unless restraints are placed on population. "The new ground," he says, "wrung from nature by improvements would not," if there had been due restraints on population, "have been all used up in the support of mere numbers." In his well-known chapter on popular remedies for low wages he forces "every position taken up by the enemies of the population principle, in their determination to find some refuge for the labourers, some plausible means of improving their condition without requiring the exercise of any self-restraint, or any greater control than at present over the animal power of multiplication."

But all such warnings were as absolutely unheeded then as they would be now. It was thought sufficient to say that Malthusianism was hard-hearted and degrading; and that Mr Mill was a doctrinaire. Our statesmen and politicians were afraid that they would lose some of their practical wisdom if they accepted the guidance of thinkers. The words of warning, however, to which we have just alluded have lost none of their significance. Assume that all the social and economic reforms which are most popular were secured: suppose, for instance, that the national debt was paid off; that standing armies were abolished; that primogeniture and entail were things of the past, and that the land was more equally divided. All this might take place, and in a few years everything would be in as unsatisfactory a condition as before, unless these reforms were accompanied by a more general development of prudential habits. Such a con-

clusion is so distasteful to the majority of mankind that every expedient is resorted to in order to escape from it. Theological prejudice is summoned, and all kinds of accusations are showered upon those who speak plainly on the subject. We will therefore endeavour simply to state the evidence upon which the conclusion rests; it will then be seen that to denounce it as degrading to human nature displays the same kind of folly as would be exhibited if the law of gravity were stigmatised as being antagonistic to the enlightenment of the 19th century.

Attention was first prominently directed to the subject of population by Malthus' essay. Probably no book has ever been more generally abused and more completely misunderstood, and certainly no author has ever been personally more misrepresented. Malthusianism still continues to be in public estimation something ominous and dreadful. Between it and Christianity, nay, even between it and all religion, there is thought to be a deadly conflict. It is supposed to be something so base and degrading that no allusion should be made to it in the presence of ladies, and men talk about it only to sneer and to condemn. Language quite as severe has been applied to the author of the essay. Not long since Malthus was described as a hard-hearted, morose old man, whose theories were now happily exploded. With regard to the personal character of Malthus it may be simply stated that he was a distinguished member of the University of Cambridge, that he was a clergyman of the Church of England, and was throughout life respected and admired not only for his intellectual gifts,

but also for his benevolence and kindness of heart. His Essay bears throughout the marks of a high morality, and probably few have ever shown themselves more anxious to raise the condition of the poor, and no one has certainly ever spoken more wisely as to the best mode of waging war against indigence. The main object of his writings was to enforce a fundamental social and moral maxim which cannot be better expressed than in his own words: "Can the most fertile imagination conceive a restraint at once so natural, so just, so consonant to the laws of God, and the best laws framed by the most enlightened men, as that each individual should be responsible for the maintenance of his own children; that is, that he should be subjected to the natural inconveniences and difficulties arising from the indulgence of his inclinations?" The well-being of a community depends upon the extent to which this responsibility is recognized. There is in almost every man so strong a desire to indulge his passions that prudential restraints upon population will nearly cease to operate, if, through the influence of a bad Poor Law, ill-considered charity, or a vicious state of public opinion, the idea is spread that the duty of maintaining children does not rest solely with their parents, but that society should bear a considerable portion of the responsibility.

One of the practical purposes of Malthus' Essay was to trace the consequences which would ensue from a relaxation of the checks upon population. Many of the important results at which he arrived may be very briefly stated. By a great number of statistics, referring to

different countries, he proved the power of increase possessed by man under various circumstances. If the conditions are extremely favourable, if the means of living are plentiful, and the climate is healthy, the population of a country not unfrequently doubles itself in twenty-five years. This was for a considerable time the rate of increase in the United States. The population of England and Wales in the year 1810 was about 10,000,000. At that time about 14 per cent. was added to the population during each ten years; this rate of increase would cause the population to double itself in 50 years. It appears that this rate of increase must have been continued with considerable steadiness; for in fifty years, namely, in 1860, the 10,000,000 had grown into 20,000,000. At the present time 200,000 are each year added to our numbers; this is almost equivalent to the population of the county of Northamptonshire. It is manifest that population will increase in a geometric ratio, if as it advances no additional checks are brought into operation. If in fifty years the descendants of a million people become two millions, it is obvious that in a hundred years the two millions will have become four millions, and at the end of the next fifty years the four millions will have grown into eight millions. Thus, assuming the rate of increase existing in England to be maintained, there would in a hundred and fifty years be eight millions descended from one million; or in other words, the population of England being ten millions in 1810, would be eighty millions in the year 1960. Slow as this rate of increase is compared with that prevailing in many other countries, it could not

be indefinitely continued, because the resources of the country would soon prove to be altogether inadequate for the maintenance of so large a population. The twenty-two and a half millions who now inhabit England and Wales often find it difficult to obtain a sufficiency of food and clothing; what would it be if there were forty millions in this country to be maintained? This will be our population in forty years, if the rate of increase which has prevailed since the beginning of the century continues. At the present time it is said that there is a great redundancy of labour; many who are willing to work cannot find employment; in most of our important branches of industry there has been great over-production; every trade and every profession is over-crowded; for every vacant clerkship there are hundreds of applications. Difficult as it is for men to obtain a livelihood, it is ten times more difficult for women to do so; partly on account of unjust laws, and partly because of the tyranny of society, they are shut out from many employments. All that has just been stated is admitted by common consent; it is the topic of daily conversation, and of daily complaint; and yet with the utmost complacency we observe 200,000 added to our population every year, and we often congratulate ourselves upon this addition to our numbers as if it were an unerring sign of advancing prosperity. But viewed in relation to the facts just mentioned, what does this addition to our numbers indicate? To this question only one reply can be given, that in ten years' time, where there are a hundred now seeking employment, there will then be a hundred and

twenty. This will not apply simply to one industry, but will be the case throughout the whole country; it will also further happen that in ten years' time for every hundred who now require food, fuel and clothing, a similar provision will have to be made for a hundred and twenty. It therefore follows that, low as the general average standard of living now is, it cannot by any means be maintained unless in ten years' time the supply of all the commodities of ordinary consumption can be increased by 20 per cent. without their becoming more costly.

It can be easily shown that when a country attains a certain density of population, each addition to its numbers will have to be fed at a greater proportionate cost; and thus as population advances our resources become more and more severely strained. The opponents of Malthus have often taken advantage of a remark he casually made that population increases in a geometric ratio, whilst food increases only in an arithmetical ratio. This expression is not perhaps strictly accurate, but the idea it contains suggests a ready mode of explaining the severe strain which a continuous advance in population must put upon the resources of a country. Those who place the greatest reliance in the efficacy of improved agriculture, must admit that in such a country as our own there are very assignable limits to the amount of additional produce which can be obtained from the soil. It would be an extravagant estimate to suppose that the produce of every farm could be doubled; and yet all the additional food which would be obtained if this took place, would be

absorbed in fifty years if the present rate of increase of the population continues. But it may be objected, that in the estimate just made only the land at present in cultivation is considered. Great reliance is often placed upon the resources of land which now lies waste. It is said that England cannot be fairly regarded as over-populated when considerable tracts which might yield food produce nothing. For instance, there are the pleasure and the sporting grounds of the rich; and there is a considerable quantity lying idle which may be regarded as public property. Thus it is argued that the 60,000 acres of the New Forest, if devoted to agricultural purposes would yield a considerable addition to the food supplies of the country, and would provide a considerable amount of productive employment. All this may be fully admitted, and yet it does not in the slightest degree obviate the necessity of imposing prudential restraints upon population. The only difference it can possibly make may be slightly to postpone the time when the pressure of population will be felt with the most severe intensity. Under no circumstances whatever is it possible to escape from the necessity of imposing checks upon the possible increase of population. Suppose, for example, that every available acre of land was cultivated, that not a single rood where an ear of wheat could be grown was reserved either for pleasure or ornament—that every tree was cut down, every hedgerow rooted up, and the country transformed into one enormous farm. Such a destruction of natural beauty, such a sacrifice of that which gives life one of its

highest enjoyments, would of course provide maintenance for an additional number of people. Let it be assumed that this extra number is a million. In about five years the million will be provided entirely by the increment at present added annually to our population. If, therefore, every available acre were cultivated, the pressure of population would in five years become as severe as it is now.

But it may be urged that England can purchase food from the whole world, and that her people are only partly maintained by the produce yielded by her own soil. Vast areas of fertile land in America and in the colonies are still unoccupied, and consequently there may appear to be scarcely any practical limit to the numbers who might be born in England if emigration were carried out on a sufficiently extensive scale. It sometimes seems to be thought that the more emigration there is the better; that by it new countries are developed which become not only excellent customers for our goods, but which also provide us with large supplies of food. It is therefore often said that as long as additional labour is required in America and the Colonies, no danger can result from the rapid increase of our population. Those who entertain these opinions are bound to consider existing facts. For many years past our people have known the advantages which emigration offers. Emigration on a large scale has taken place, and the question which has to be met is this: admit that emigration would prove the best remedy for poverty by drawing off surplus labour, yet how is

emigration to be brought into operation on a larger scale, so that our pauperism instead of increasing may be diminished? As explained in the last chapter, the simple expedient of shipping off our paupers to America and the Colonies, would not only prove mischievous but is impracticable. These countries would naturally object to be burdened with the pauperism of the Old World. It has also been shewn that the policy would involve one of the two following alternatives. In the first place, the State might assist the emigration of those only who were paupers; this would give a disastrous encouragement to improvidence; the scheme would, moreover, help the improvident at the expense of the thrifty. In the second place, the Government might adopt another alternative, and might aid all those who are desirous to emigrate. This plan could not, however, be carried out without seriously jeopardizing the very existence of the nation:—for a pecuniary bribe would be offered to our best and most intelligent labourers to leave these shores; they would go, and there would be left behind all those who were too old, too young, or too indolent to work. In order also to pay the expenses of this emigration the country would be burdened with a constantly increasing load of taxation. It is therefore evident that no reliance ought to be placed upon the State being able so much to promote emigration as to provide a remedy for over-population. Ireland should serve to warn us of the terrible misfortunes brought upon a country by an undue increase of population. At the beginning of the 18th century the population of that country

was about two millions; maintaining for the next hundred and fifty years a smaller rate of increase than is now going on in England, the two millions had grown into eight millions in the year 1847. The country at this time became so densely peopled that a considerable proportion of the nation could only obtain the barest subsistence; still nothing was done to avert the suffering that was certain to ensue; the people went on marrying with as much recklessness as if they were the first settlers in a new country, possessing a boundless area of fertile land. All the influence that could be exerted by religion prompted the continuance of habits of utter improvidence; the priests and other ministers of religion encouraged early marriages. At length there came one of those unpropitious seasons which are certain occasionally to recur; the potato, the staple food of the people, was diseased, and it was soon found that there were more people in the country than could be fed. A fearful famine ensued; the horrors which were then endured seem now to baffle all belief; people crawled into the towns from the country districts in so emaciated a condition that they died in the streets. Tradesmen in some of the west and south-western parts of the country still describe the dread with which they opened their shop-doors in the morning, having too much reason to fear that there would be two or three corpses on the threshold. In some villages more than half the people were starved to death; and all this happened in spite of England doing everything in her power to relieve the distress. Large sums of public money were

voted for the purpose; there was in fact no deficiency of means, but the consequences resulting from a long continued disregard of prudence at length culminated in a great catastrophe, from which evils arose far too deep-seated and wide spread to be controlled by any available powers of administration. Large supplies of food were sent to Ireland, but the distribution of it often fell into hopeless confusion; great numbers were too weak or too diseased to come to the places where relief was dispensed, and thousands were starved unnoticed and undiscovered. All this terrible suffering at length caused the fact to be generally recognized that the country was greatly over-peopled; an unprecedented exodus to the United States commenced, and in a few years the population was reduced, by the combined influence of famine and emigration, from eight millions to five millions and a half. As an argument against State emigration it may be remarked that great as this emigration was from Ireland, it was almost entirely the result of voluntary efforts. Directly those who first left succeeded in saving anything, they sent money back to Ireland to pay the passage-money of some of their friends and relations who were left behind. It has been calculated that between 1847 and 1864 no less a sum than £10,000,000 was transmitted for this purpose by the Irish in the United States. If the policy of State-emigration had been once generally adopted, all this great stream of voluntary effort would have been dried up.

It may perhaps be thought, after the description

just given of the state of Ireland, that however much a country may become over-populated, emigration will always provide an effectual remedy. What were the conditions under which this remedy was brought into efficient operation? It was not applied until famine had spread itself over the land, and until this alternative was presented to the whole country that one of two things must happen—either a large proportion of the people must emigrate or must die by starvation. Before the crisis came, the country had for years been reduced to the lowest depths of misery; the pressure of population was so severe that in many districts fourpence a day represented the ordinary rate of wages; the competition for land became so intense that rents were no longer determined by considerations of profit; a bare subsistence was often all that was left to the occupier; it was not unusual for a tenant to promise to pay a rent which far exceeded the total value of the annual produce of the land. All this happened, and the people were not warned. Not a single effort was made to ward off the inevitable consequences of continuous over-population. The country became more and more miserable and impoverished, and yet no remedy was applied; the habits of the people continued unchanged, and it was not until wide-spread famine afflicted the land that they were arrested in their fatal course.

With this experience before us, it is surely dangerous in the extreme for the population of a country like England to go on continually increasing. It cannot be right or wise that, following the example of Ireland,

we should observe the growth of poverty, we should know that an increasing population is each year pressing more severely upon our sources of employment, and upon our supplies of food, and yet anticipate with complacency the advent of the day when the people will be compelled by dire necessity to emigrate in masses or to seek refuge in some other drastic remedy. Before the arrival of such a time the nation would have to bear incalculable misery, and the demoralization she would have to pass through might inflict a permanent injury upon her. The people cannot be still further impoverished without grave risk to the whole community. It should be remembered that at the present time large sections of the population are living under conditions so unfavourable to health as to cause a great destruction of human life. Not only do thousands annually fall victims to scarlet-fever and other diseases which are produced by neglecting sanitary arrangements, but there is amongst the poorer classes an excessive mortality amongst children. In the wealthy parish of St George's, Hanover Square, less than one third of the total number of deaths is of children under five years old; whereas in the poor parish of Bethnal Green the deaths of children under five amount to more than half the total number of deaths. This excessive mortality is no doubt mainly due to our crowded and unwholesome dwellings, and to insufficient food and clothing; these causes more or less directly originate from poverty, and therefore would work with intensified effect if poverty were increased. It may be therefore thought that the evil of over-population carries with it its own cure;

that as the people increase in number poverty becomes greater; that if there is more poverty there will be a larger number of deaths. A check to increasing population is thus brought into operation, and hence things will be restored to the same state as they were before. The hardest words which have been ever used against Malthusianism altogether fail adequately to characterise such a doctrine. Yet increased mortality is not only one of the inevitable results of continuous over-population, but must be relied on as one of the ways of escaping from its consequences. It will therefore be well distinctly to appreciate what is implied in bringing into operation causes which will produce greater mortality; some definite idea may be formed on the subject by considering the results involved in the present high death-rate prevailing amongst the children of the poor. Assume that there are 1000 of these children, that 500 of them die before the age of five, whereas if they were as well cared for as the children of more wealthy parents, only 200 of them would die before this age. The death, therefore, of 300 is to be traced to defects in our social and economic condition. These children are literally slaughtered, and in a manner, moreover, which indicates prolonged suffering. But this is only a part, and perhaps the smaller part, of the mischief which is done; the causes which produce this excessive mortality do not alone affect the children who die; all those who survive are also brought under the same blighting influence. Consequently to all the struggle for existence becomes more severe, the more weakly

succumb; even the stronger who survive, in passing through the trying ordeal often contract the germs of future disease, their constitutions being in too many cases undermined. Physical deterioration ensues, and a whole people may thus become gradually stunted and enfeebled.

It is sometimes thought that the population question has, as far as England is concerned, lost most of its immediate importance owing to the adoption of free-trade. When Malthus' Essay was published the abolition of protection was a remote possibility; and consequently his reasonings were based on the hypothesis that our supplies of food must chiefly be provided by our own soil. Now, however, free-trade has opened to us the markets of the world, we can buy food wherever it can be obtained at the lowest price; a considerable portion of the corn annually consumed is imported; and there appears to be scarcely any limit to the quantity which may be provided by such countries as America. All this may be admitted, and yet it does not in any way follow that a continually increasing population can be fed without a rise in the price of food. There are evidently two different kinds of commodities to be considered; first, those that can be imported, and secondly, those which are so perishable that they cannot be procured from any distant country. This latter class includes such articles as fresh meat, butter, and milk; the rise in their price, consequent upon an increase of population, is of course much more marked than in the case of such a commodity as corn, which can be readily imported. It is in fact a matter of every-day remark,

that meat, butter, milk, &c., are gradually becoming more expensive. The result is that they are each year taken more and more out of the reach of the means of the poor; many a hardworking labourer seldom tastes meat more than once a week; milk is often difficult to obtain in many country districts, and its great scarcity in towns, and the temptation there consequently is to adulterate it, may be regarded as one of the chief causes of the excessive mortality amongst the children of the poor.

When it is remembered that if the present rate of increase of population is maintained for the next ten years the number of people will be augmented by about one-tenth, it will be easily understood how much more costly all such articles as meat and dairy produce will become. The price of corn will not, in consequence of foreign supplies, advance to the same extent; still the law holds good that the price increases with the demand, although the amount of increase is much less than it would be if the area from which new supplies can be obtained were more restricted. There can be little doubt that a slow yet steady advance in the price of corn is beginning to be perceptible; the average price of wheat during the last ten years is considerably in excess of what it was during the ten years immediately succeeding the adoption of free-trade. It therefore follows that if population continues to increase, any advantage resulting from improvements in the means of producing wealth will gradually be absorbed in the support of mere numbers, and people will lapse into the same unsatisfactory condition in which they were before. This suggests an expla-

nation of the fact previously noticed, that the general condition of the poor is at the present time but little better than it was previous to the introduction of free-trade. For some time after the repeal of the corn laws there was much general prosperity; the average price of wheat was extremely low, and other articles of food were cheap. There was general activity of trade, employment was abundant, and wages were high. But unhappily in this prosperity there were the germs of future poverty. The people did not become more prudent; the additional wealth which was then obtained did not generally lead to more saving; a greater amount was spent in drink, and the number of marriages rapidly increased. The additional numbers who were thus each year added to the population caused a gradual increase in the demand for food; its price has consequently steadily advanced, and the poor are now beginning each year more keenly to feel this augmentation in the cost of living. Moreover, the extra numbers who were then born are now competing for employment as able-bodied labourers; hence it comes to pass that every trade is overcrowded, and complaints are frequent that labour is redundant. In this way two agencies have been brought into operation which each year will work with accumulating effect in depressing the condition of the people; in the first place the cost of living increases, and in the second place wages will be gradually reduced, because there is a greater supply of labour in proportion to the demand for it. It may therefore be said that the advantages which free-trade might have permanently con-

ferred upon our labourers have been lost; no lasting benefit could result unless it were accompanied by increased providence. Instead of this the additional prosperity which was for a time enjoyed, stimulated an increase of population, and thus the prosperity carried with it the seeds of its own destruction; in the end therefore the result will be, not that there is a more general diffusion of comfort, not that there is a higher standard of living, but that there are a greater number of people in the country who will live much the same life as those who went before them.

Events only too surely tell us that what happened after the passing of free-trade would happen again, if at the present time any favourable agency were brought into operation. The following suggestive sentence appears in the last quarterly report of the Registrar General: "The population engaged in the production of coal and iron are recovering from depression, and are again marrying and giving in marriage at their usual pace." From the fact thus simply stated many most important conclusions may be deduced. It is known that the iron and the coal trades have always been characterized by recurring periods of adversity and prosperity. For a few years there is perhaps great activity in these branches of industry, employment is plentiful, and wages are high; in a short time there always seems to succeed a period of corresponding dullness; probably the high profits which have been previously realized have stimulated over-production; possibly also the trade may be affected by some foreign disturbances. From these or other causes the

demand falls off, operations have to be contracted, employment becomes scarce, many hands are discharged, and the remainder receive reduced wages. It is obvious that some provision ought to be made when trade is prosperous, to meet these adverse times; but not only is such a course not adopted, but the high wages received when trade is active actually add to the difficulties which have to be contended against when trade becomes dull. For the Registrar General tells us that the iron and coal trades having recovered from a long depression, reviving prosperity is evidenced by an increasing number of marriages; population is thus stimulated, and when dullness of trade again recurs there will consequently be in the course of a few years a larger number competing for employment. Wages will therefore be lower than they otherwise would be, there will be an extra number to be fed, and food will be dearer; the state of things, instead of being improved, will be rendered more gloomy, and this will always be the inheritance left to future generations by exceptional prosperity, if, instead of promoting greater providence, it encourages more recklessness with regard to marriage.

In order still further to prove this, let an extreme case be assumed. Suppose that through some miraculous intervention all the resources of this country were doubled; that for every acre of fertile land there was another of equal fertility added, and that the productiveness of every industry was doubled. It might be thought that such a vast augmentation of the material resources of the country would secure the permanent extermination of pauperism;

in fifty years, however, the general condition of the community would be exactly what it is now, unless a change were effected in the social habits of the people; for at the end of this time the population would be doubled even with the present rate of increase, and it is seen from what the Registrar General tells us that the additional wealth would stimulate a much more rapid rate of increase. In fifty years, therefore, such a miraculous augmentation of produce as that supposed would be required by the larger population then existing; in fact, the pressure upon the resources of a country, and the struggle for existence would then be at least as severe as it is now, and the general condition of the people would not be in any way more satisfactory.

We have endeavoured to prove that even the most favourable agencies will not permanently diminish pauperism in this country, unless there is at the same time a greater diffusion of prudence amongst the people. If, therefore, no means can be suggested for developing such prudence, there would appear to be every reason to feel despondency with regard to the future. Although at the present time there is much ground for grave apprehension, although our situation is in many respects critical, yet we confidently believe that it is possible to apply efficient remedies. If, however, we should not have the courage to do so, there can be no doubt that things will grow rapidly from bad to worse. Before proceeding to explain these remedies, it will be necessary to make some remarks upon various causes which affect the rate of increase in the population. It has been already observed that popu-

lation advances in some countries much more rapidly than in others; in America it doubles itself in twenty-five years, in England the period required for doubling the population is about twice as long; in some countries there is a much smaller rate of increase, whilst in others the population may be either stationary or declining. In all countries it may be shewn that the rate of increase is less than the possible power of multiplication. It is obvious that various restraining causes must be in operation. These have been classified by Malthus as positive and preventive checks. The former are generally material agencies, the latter are usually moral agencies. Thus, all such circumstances as the following may be regarded as positive checks; famine, disease, war, or conditions of life unfavourable to health, such as insufficient food and clothing, and unwholesome dwellings. Preventive checks are in operation when population is restrained by prudential considerations. It may therefore be concluded that positive checks imply vice and misery; whereas the more general operation of preventive checks indicates the diffusion of a high morality. Probably the most satisfactory test of the civilization of a country would be to ascertain to what extent the positive and the preventive checks respectively operate; nothing would more surely indicate national advancement than if it were found that the latter were obtaining relatively greater force than the former. At the present time it is evident that in this country both of these checks must operate; for, although there is a considerable pres-

sure of population, yet the rate of increase is only half what it has often been in other countries.

There are always many exceptions to any general description; but it may be said with approximate accuracy that, so far as the poor are concerned, the positive checks work with much the greater force, whereas they exert little influence compared with the preventive checks upon the middle and upper classes. Allusion has already been made to the excessive mortality amongst the children of the poor; this of course exerts a most powerful effect in keeping down population; the rate of increase in our numbers would probably be double what it is at the present time if there was no greater mortality among the children of the poor than among the children of more wealthy parents. Population is therefore in this way restrained by positive checks, because the excessive mortality is due to such causes as insufficient and unwholesome food, and to overcrowded dwellings. Population may be regarded as kept down by a positive check if life is shortened through an employment being unhealthy. It is well known that those who are employed in certain trades are extremely short-lived. If there were less drunkenness in the country there would be much less disease, and the average of life would be prolonged; this indicates another positive check upon population. That prudential considerations but very slightly affect the poor is clearly proved by the fact that any additional prosperity, however temporary it may be, is sure to cause a greater number of marriages. It has been often pointed

out that the number of marriages regularly varies with the price of corn; the few extra shillings which can be saved during the year that bread is cheap, is therefore to many of the poor a sufficient inducement to marry; they are perhaps thus enabled to purchase a few articles of furniture, and there can be no doubt that to the great majority of our labourers a desire to marry is at once gratified, if just enough can be gathered together to furnish a house. No thought is taken of the extra expense which a family will incur. In such cases, therefore, preventive checks are almost entirely absent. The middle and upper classes, however, are generally acted upon by very different motives; people who are comparatively well off, feel that they have something to sacrifice; they hesitate to take any step which would prevent them maintaining the position they have acquired; they would not like to sacrifice the comforts to which they have been accustomed, consequently they do not usually marry until they believe that they have a fair chance of being able adequately to maintain a family. Marriage, therefore, is often deferred. Hence it appears that in our own country, although the rate of increase of population is such that it would double itself in fifty years, yet the rate would at once become much more rapid if the preventive checks now in operation were discontinued. It therefore follows, that if population is still further to be restrained, some of the existing checks must work with increased effect. It has been already explained that wide-spread vice and misery are indicated by positive checks, and consequently their influence cannot be extended without

augmenting human suffering. Hence it may be further concluded that unless the condition of our country is to become rapidly more unsatisfactory, the preventive checks on population must operate with increasing effect, the influence of the positive checks being gradually supplanted.

We are now able to obtain an insight into the conditions involved in the solution of the problem of pauperism. As no remedy can prove permanently effectual which does not increase the force of the preventive checks upon population, and lessen the influence of those which are positive, it becomes necessary to ascertain what are the agencies which will promote the more general diffusion of prudential habits. Great good will result from associating with such agencies every circumstance which will act favourably upon the material resources of the country. Moral and material forces will act and react upon each other, and the improvement which results must be regarded as the joint product of their combined operation. Thus, if at the time of the passing of free-trade the people had become more generally prudent, not only would an additional stimulus have been given to the prosperity which free-trade in the first instance brought, but this prosperity, instead of being gradually frittered away in the support of mere numbers, would have steadily grown and would have become permanently impressed upon the community. In order to render this perfectly clear, let it be supposed that the additional wealth distributed amongst the labourers after the abolition of protection, instead of

causing a larger number of marriages had in great part been saved. If this had been done, pauperism would by this time have been greatly diminished; the burden which it imposes upon industry would gradually be almost entirely taken off; wages would not be depressed by a redundancy of labour; and the rise in the price of almost all the necessaries of life produced by the demand of a growing population would not have occurred. Happily for the future of the country, it is possible to call into activity many agencies which are capable of securing the desired moral and national advancement. Amongst these agencies it is scarcely necessary to remark that a position of first prominence should be given to national education. It will be shewn in a subsequent chapter specially devoted to this subject, that the education of the whole people would secure a most important moral and material advancement; labour would be rendered more efficient; the whole community would in this way become enriched, and prudential habits would probably be so much more generally diffused that the additional wealth enjoyed would not be gradually lost, but would represent a permanent advantage conferred upon the nation. It will also be shewn that as intellectual and moral faculties become more generally developed, there will be a prospect of remedying some of the gravest defects in our present industrial economy.

Manifold evils are produced by the complete separation between capital and labour, which may be regarded as a prominent characteristic of our industry. Capital and labour are usually supplied by two distinct classes,

who regard each other as rivals, keenly contending over a pecuniary bargain; this antagonism most seriously impedes industrial efficiency, and a severe loss is inflicted not only on employers and employed, but upon the whole community. It cannot be right that such a state of things should continue; there is no reason why our artisans and our peasantry should always be labourers working for hire, having no direct interest in the success of their work, and no claim to share the profits which it yields. Other systems may be introduced based upon the principle of an union between capital and labour; wherever this co-operation has been carried out the results obtained have proved that, if it could be extended over the whole country, a remedy would be provided for much that is most unsatisfactory in our social and economic condition. It will hereafter be seen that the qualities which are required for the successful carrying out of co-operative schemes will rarely be found, except in those who have received some mental training. It will also be explained that many other agencies must be brought into operation; for instance, a reform in our system of land tenure is imperatively required. The land of this country is each year owned by a smaller number of proprietors. This is due to various causes, many of which can be either directly or indirectly controlled by legislation. A most striking contrast is presented between the past and present agricultural economy of this country; the cultivator of the soil now rarely possesses a single proprietary right; formerly, not only were there a great number of small estates, which were farmed

by their owners, but almost the whole of the rural population possessed some proprietary rights. Thus, in nearly every village there was formerly some common land. In a future chapter an account will be given of the incalculable extent to which the poor have been injured, by the conversion of common land into private property. The subject is of much practical importance, because there still remains a considerable extent of common land which may yet be saved for the public.

Sufficient has been said to indicate the nature of those agencies upon which reliance must be chiefly placed, for diminishing pauperism, and for raising the general condition of the people. In entering upon a more detailed consideration of these agencies, it should be constantly borne in mind that it is essential to accompany each addition to material prosperity with a corresponding moral improvement. This is the reason why we have given so prominent a position to the Poor Law. Experience has, we think, proved that our existing Poor Law so powerfully encourages improvidence, that until there is a radical change in the present method of administering relief, it is hopeless to expect any very general diffusion of prudence. Having, therefore, explained the nature of the desired change, we will proceed to describe some of the consequences which would ensue from national education.

CHAPTER IV.

NATIONAL EDUCATION; ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS.

THE above title has been given to this chapter, because a consideration of national education in all its bearings would involve the discussion of many questions which are not connected with the subject of this work. It is not our purpose to consider the details of an educational measure; the object we have in view is to trace the consequences which would ensue if every child received a reasonably good education. Although it is not our intention to investigate the merits or demerits of any suggested scheme, it should still be remarked, in order to prevent misapprehension, that the so-called national education measure passed during the Session of 1870 is in no way entitled to such a name. The only thing it will certainly do is to provide the country with a sufficient supply of suitable schools; it does not, however, guarantee the education of a single child; for, when the required schools have been provided, there is no security that the children now growing up in ignorance will be compelled

to attend them. The measure, no doubt, contains a singularly strange provision, which has been designated "Permissive Compulsion." By it each town or each country parish is permitted to pass bye-laws for compelling the attendance of children at school. It seems probable that not more than three or four towns will avail themselves of the power thus conferred upon them, and that not a single country parish will take advantage of it. It will, moreover, be shewn that the application of compulsion in this partial and haphazard way will test the experiment under the most unfavourable conditions; and consequently the tide of public opinion, which has been running strongly in favour of general compulsory education, may not improbably be turned in an opposite direction.

Before describing the effects which would result from guaranteeing elementary instruction to all, it will be useful to consider some of the objections urged against general compulsion. There can be no doubt that a strong case ought to be made out in order to justify interference between parents and children. Government interference usually tends to destroy individuality, and to weaken self-reliance; each demand, therefore, which is made for State assistance should be most jealously watched. Frequent reference has been made in these pages to many most mischievous demands which are urged upon the Government. Amongst other things which the State is asked to do, it is expected to pay the passage-money of emigrants, to find work for the unemployed, and to provide free education. Not only is too much

required from the State, but it already attempts too much. None of the objections, however, usually urged against Government interference apply to compulsory education. If the people were educated they would not become less self-reliant; their dependence upon extraneous help, instead of being increased, would gradually so much diminish that after the lapse of a generation or two the compulsory law, though it might be continued, would virtually cease to operate. It is often used as an argument against compulsion, that the law which enforces it in Prussia has become a dead letter. Mr Mark Pattison, who officially investigated the continental systems of education, says: "Schooling there is compulsory only in name. The school has become so deeply rooted in the social habits of the German people, that if the law were repealed to-morrow the schools would continue to be as full as they are now." Such experience, instead of being an argument against compulsion, is the strongest possible testimony in its favour. It shews that when the education of parents has been secured, the education of their children is also guaranteed. Education begets education, because people who have enjoyed its advantages will strive hard to let their children enjoy them also. Ignorance, on the other hand, too often begets ignorance. However strong may be the objections to the general principle of State intervention, yet an exception can be justly made in favour of compulsory education. Ignorance is an evil which will not cure itself; coercion must be applied, in order to eradicate it. Moreover, interference on behalf of children rests entirely on different

grounds from interference on behalf of grown-up people. There is a constant danger that the latter may be encouraged to rely too little upon their own efforts, and too much upon the help obtained from others; the former, however, have no power to help themselves. If the parent neglects his duty to his children, they may suffer an irreparable injury, which they have no power to ward off; the State consequently becomes their natural and proper protector. In order, therefore, to justify compulsory education, it is only necessary to shew that a child suffers a grave injury if he is permitted to grow up in ignorance. A few words will suffice to indicate the nature and extent of the injury thus inflicted. In the first place, it is obvious that ignorance greatly limits the area of enjoyment; it cuts a man off from many of the truest and most lasting pleasures; all literature, all philosophy, and all science are closed to him; many things which to one who is educated are blessings fruitful of good, often become to one who is ignorant positive misfortunes. Thus, one of the greatest reproaches against our present industrial economy, is that it yields so little leisure to those who live by daily toil; leisure may be a priceless boon to those who can properly use it, but spare time hangs so heavily upon those who are unable to read, that in order to get rid of it they often have no other resource but the public-house. Considering the present condition of our agricultural labourers, can anyone suppose that additional leisure would be of any advantage to them? Not long since I happened to be calling on one of these labourers about half-past six

o'clock in the evening; he was a man of natural ability far above the average; on my expressing surprise that he was going to bed at so early an hour, he replied in words which could not but produce a deep impression on anyone who heard them: "My time is of no use to me; I can't read, and it is no good sitting up wasting candles and fuel for nothing." No one can be surprised if a man in such a position were tempted to go to the public-house, where he would find society, and thus obtain amusement; such visits may very probably gradually lead him into intemperate ways, and all the evils which result from drunkenness might ensue. But if this should be so, would not the chief responsibility be upon those, who, when this man was a child, permitted his life to be blighted with ignorance? The uneducated have also to pass through life with crippled powers; they have not a fair chance of contending in that struggle for existence upon which all have to embark who are obliged to earn their own livelihood. Few, if any, industrial operations are so entirely mechanical that a man will perform them equally well whether his mental powers have been developed, or have been permitted to remain dormant. Ignorance, therefore, takes away a considerable part of the power which an individual possesses to acquire the means of living. This will be more clearly shewn as we proceed to explain how greatly the efficiency of labour is promoted by education. Sufficient, however, has here been stated to prove that the injury inflicted by ignorance is so great as to justify the State in carrying out a scheme of general compulsory education.

It is, however, requisite not only to establish the abstract justice of such a scheme, but it is also necessary to consider the importance to be attributed to the practical objections which are urged against its adoption. The neglect of a child's education is almost invariably due to one of the three following causes: ignorance, avarice, or poverty. These causes are intimately connected with each other. A man who is ignorant does not usually appreciate the advantages of education, and therefore makes no effort to give it to his children; other parents, who would like to educate their children, are too poor either to afford the school-pence or to do without their children's earnings; others there are who take their children from school, not because they are obliged to do so, but because they are anxious to have more to spend in drink. It is at once obvious that the case presenting by far the most formidable difficulties is when the necessities of the parents oblige them to take their children from school. We will, therefore, reserve this more difficult question until we have considered what ought to be done when children are deprived of education, either through the ignorance or the avarice of their parents.

Some idea may be formed of the extent to which the first of these causes operates by ascertaining the number of children who are neither at school nor at work. It was lately proved, after a house to house visitation, that in many parts of Manchester more than half the children between the ages of nine and thirteen are neither at school nor at work. These children are not kept away from school in consequence of their parents being unable

to pay the school-pence. The society which made the investigation was ready to provide gratuitous admission to the schools. Such a state of things provides the strongest argument in favour of compulsion, because the parents would even temporarily suffer no pecuniary loss if all these children, who were being reared in idleness and running to ruin in the streets, were compelled to go to school. Nothing but State intervention can prove of the slightest avail; Manchester is well provided with educational appliances, and the mere multiplication of schools will not in the slightest degree affect the class that we are now speaking about. The evil will not remedy itself, but will each year assume more extensive proportions. Can there be any hope that the children who are now in the streets will, when they grow up, be less apathetic about education than their parents now are?

It is not only those who are neither at school nor at work who have to be considered; there are a vast number whose ignorance is due to the early age at which they were taken from school in order that they might earn wages. As previously remarked, this premature employment may be prompted either by avarice or by poverty. There cannot manifestly be any reason why the State should hesitate to interfere when children suffer through the avarice of their parents. It is, of course, impossible accurately to measure the extent to which this cause operates; some idea, however, may be formed of its wide-spread influence by remembering that no inconsiderable part of the many millions annually

spent by the working-classes in spirits, is expended by those whose children are at work when they ought to be at school.

It must be also borne in mind that it is not contemplated, even if a general scheme of compulsion were carried out, to deprive parents of anything more than a portion of their children's earnings. The whole question would be greatly simplified if it were more frequently remembered that for nearly a quarter of a century compulsory education has been applied to some of our most important branches of industry; its working has been so effectual as to cause it to be gradually extended, until by recent legislation it embraces every trade in the country except agriculture. The Factory Acts, which were passed about twenty-five years since, introduced compulsory education; for it is a fundamental principle of this legislation that no child under thirteen years of age shall be permitted to work unless he spends fifteen hours each week at school. In this way the half-time system was introduced, for the required schooling was provided by the child spending half the day at school and the other half at work. This system has proved to be most signally successful; the alternate working and schooling mutually assist each other; school is a relief from work, and work is a relief from school. The result is that the half-time children are often found to have acquired, not only more knowledge, but also more industrial skill than children of a corresponding age who spend their whole time either at school or at work. As the compulsory education embodied in this legislation is now generally

approved, it seems incredible that there should be any hesitation in enforcing a similar educational obligation upon those parents whose children are neither at school nor at work. At the present moment our Legislature virtually says a man shall be fined and imprisoned if he permits his children to be employed in any branch of industry except agriculture unless they receive each week a certain amount of schooling; whilst at the same time the Legislature allows absolute impunity to all those whose children never enter a school, but who idle in the streets trained to pauperism and to crime. This anomaly is defended by our so-called practical statesmen; if such an absurdity were sanctioned by any other people, the Chinese for example, we should probably speak of them as an inferior race.

When, therefore, the bearing which the Factory Acts have upon compulsory education is properly considered, the arguments against general compulsion are reduced within an extremely narrow compass. As the policy is now by common consent sanctioned of enforcing education upon all children who are employed in any branch of industry except agriculture, there cannot be any valid reason for refusing also to enforce school-attendance upon children who are not at work. If, however, this were carried out, the children who are engaged in agriculture would be the only ones remaining who would be affected by general compulsion. In proposing to extend compulsion to agriculture, we are at once confronted with difficulties which are connected with the poverty of the parents. The agricultural labourer, except in a few

favoured counties, such as Northumberland, is generally so poor that he can ill afford to lose even a small portion of his children's earnings. Let it be, for instance, supposed that one of these labourers earns 10*s.* a week, and that his two boys, aged twelve and eleven, earn respectively 3*s.* and 2*s.* a week; the weekly income of the family will therefore be 15*s.* The adoption of the half-time system would, by compelling these children to spend half their time at school, diminish their aggregate earnings by 2*s.* 6*d.* a week; consequently, the family income would be 12*s.* 6*d.* instead of 15*s.* This is a reduction of more than 15 per cent.; consequently, the application to agriculture of compulsory education, as embodied in the half-time system, might very possibly impose an income-tax of more than 15 per cent. upon the poorest labourers in the country. The middle and upper classes have never submitted to an income tax half as onerous as this; can it therefore be right to impose it upon the poorest of all our labourers? It must, we think, be admitted that we have given full force to the argument which is based on the poverty of the parents. Having done this, we will proceed to consider what can be urged on the other side.

In the first place, the children would not necessarily be deprived of half their earnings, although they were compelled to spend half their time at school. If compulsion were general, the supply of juvenile labour throughout the country would be diminished by compulsory school-attendance; this lessening of the supply would at once tend to raise the price; the remuneration given

to such labour would consequently increase, and children would not lose as much as half their previous earnings, although they were only able to work half the time they did before. There is also another way in which the parents would obtain a considerable compensation; it is perfectly well known that the competition of juvenile labour exerts a very powerful effect in reducing the wages of adults. If the aggregate supply of juvenile labour were diminished, it would obviously cease to exercise so great a competing force, and adult labour would obtain a considerably higher remuneration. Hence, in the manner just described there would arise two very important counterbalancing advantages; it is, however, to be remarked that their effect would be greatly diminished if compulsion, instead of being general, were local and partial, as provided by the measure recently passed. Suppose, for instance, that compulsion were applied in some country parish, or in some town, and not in the surrounding neighbourhood; the people subjected to compulsion would, under such circumstances, receive little or no compensation from a rise in the remuneration either of juvenile or of adult labour; such a rise would be prevented by the competition of the labour in the surrounding districts in which compulsion was not applied.

Although the labourer who is deprived through compulsory education of a portion of his children's earnings would not suffer so serious a loss as at first supposed, yet it must be admitted that at any rate he would for a time lose something. Let it be assumed that the loss, instead

of being 2*s.* 6*d.* a week, is 1*s.* a week; still this represents an income tax of nearly 7 per cent., and is a very onerous burden upon one so poor. Although it may seem to be a paradox, yet a satisfactory answer to the objection just suggested is obtained by considering how extreme is the poverty of such a labourer as the one here described. Whatever happens, it is impossible for him to be worse off than he is at the present time; his wages are not sufficient to give him an adequate supply of many of the first necessaries of life; the remuneration he receives is not determined by the state of the general labour-market, but is regulated by considerations of what is the smallest amount upon which he and his family can live. That this is the case is proved by the well-known fact that, in those counties where wages are the lowest, they always fluctuate with the price of wheat. If wheat is low, say 40*s.* a quarter, wages are 9*s.* and 10*s.* a week; they are advanced to 11*s.* or 12*s.* if wheat rises to 60*s.* or 70*s.* a quarter. When wages depend, as they ordinarily do, upon demand and supply, all fluctuations in wages must be produced either by an alteration in the amount of capital embarked in industry, or by some change in the number of labourers seeking employment. There is no reason why an advance or a decline in the price of wheat should affect either the amount of capital invested in agriculture, or the number of the labourers. The way, however, in which these fluctuations in agricultural wages are brought about is perfectly well known: farmers, when they meet at market, talk the subject of wages over with each other; if there is a rise in the price of wheat they

come to a general conclusion that their labourers are unable to live on their present wages; a tacit agreement is come to to pay them an extra 1*s.* or 2*s.* a week; no formal resolution is passed, but the agreement is just as binding on all the farmers in the district as would be a legal enactment. When wheat again declines, a similar proceeding is adopted; the farmers agree that the labourers can live upon a shilling or two less each week, and consequently wages throughout the locality are reduced by this amount. All this, however, conclusively shews that in those counties where the remuneration of labour is the lowest, wages are determined by considering what is the smallest amount on which a man and his family can live; or in other words, wages may be regarded as constantly at a minimum. It consequently follows that our lowest paid labourers would be receiving less than minimum wages if a certain amount were taken away from their present earnings, either by compulsory education, or by any other similar agency. When, however, less than minimum wages are received, a man would obtain too little to live upon. This could not of course continue, and the result would be that if compulsory education interfered with the children's earnings, the labourer would be compensated, because the minimum would have to be raised just in the same way as it is advanced when there is a rise in the price of wheat.

It therefore seems that the objection suggested by the poverty of the parents is by no means so serious as at first sight appears. Whatever importance may be attributed to it, it certainly ought not to delay the in-

estimable boon of general education; this will be more clearly shewn as we proceed to explain the more prominent social and economic advantages which would result if elementary instruction were guaranteed to every child. Before, however, doing this, it will be advisable to anticipate another objection which may be urged if the lowest paid labourers are compensated for a partial loss of their children's earnings in such a manner as has been here described. It has been explained that this compensation is obtained by a rise in the wages both of juvenile and adult labour: this apparently indicates the imposition of a tax upon the employer, since he would be compelled to pay higher wages. As these lowest paid labourers, to whom our remarks refer, are chiefly engaged in agriculture, it becomes necessary to ascertain whether the farmers who employ these labourers would really suffer any loss by paying increased wages. It cannot be too frequently borne in mind that the labour which receives the smallest remuneration is not always the least costly. Everyone understands that it is false economy to underfeed a horse; employers, however, have yet to learn that it is an economy not less false to have underfed labourers. Some very striking facts can be adduced which appear to prove that of all our agricultural labour, the worst paid is really the most costly. Agricultural wages in Northumberland are 70 or 80 per cent. higher than they are in the southern and eastern counties of England. The children in Northumberland are seldom permitted by their parents to go to work until they are thirteen or fourteen years of age; their

educational condition is consequently most satisfactory; their physical strength is not exhausted by premature employment. The higher wages earned by the family provide a better diet; the Northumberland peasants will not submit to live in uncomfortable houses, and their houses have sufficient attractions for them that they seldom go to the public-house, and drunkenness is almost unknown. All these circumstances combine to render their labour so efficient that the farmers who employ it are amongst the most prosperous in the country; the land is, in fact, rendered so much more productive that not only can higher wages be paid, but a greater amount remains to be allotted as profits to the farmer and as rent to the landlord. One of the most experienced land-agents in the eastern counties of England, after having made a tour of inspection through the Lothians and Northumberland, came to the conclusion that the wages in these districts were about 60 per cent. higher than in his own neighbourhood; that the farmers were doing very much better, although the rents they paid, after making due allowance for any difference in the quality of the land, were very considerably higher than the rents prevailing in such counties as Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. This striking difference in the state of the two districts is exactly analogous to what will always occur when industrial appliances are more efficient in one case than they are in another. Suppose, for instance, that a farmer half starves his horses, and uses extremely inferior implements; the inevitable result will be that he will realise much less profit, and will be able to pay a much

smaller rent than a farmer who keeps his cattle properly and who avails himself of the best implements. Just in the same way farmers in those counties where the lowest wages prevail obtain small profits, because their labourers are underfed, and because, from deficient education, the labour is unskilled and rude. Such a farmer, instead of suffering a pecuniary loss, would be directly benefited if, as the result of compulsory education, he were obliged to pay somewhat higher wages, and in the end secure more intelligent labourers. This will be even more clearly shewn in the description which we shall now give of the economic and social advantages which would be produced by a general diffusion of education.

Beginning with the economic advantages, it may be observed that there is scarcely an industrial process which does not require a mental as well as a physical effort. It has until recently been generally assumed that agricultural operations varied so little from year to year, and that the implements with which the land was cultivated were so simple, that education was of little importance either to a farmer or to his labourers. But gradually the truth is beginning to dawn even upon farmers themselves, that agriculture, as much as any other industry, requires skill and intelligence; that in order to realise satisfactory profits, costly and complicated implements must be used, and that these cannot with safety or advantage be intrusted to rude and ignorant workmen. Employers in every part of the country now complain that each year it is becoming more doubtful whether England will be able to maintain the com-

mercial supremacy she once possessed: the countries which are becoming her most formidable competitors are those which like Prussia and the United States have long since established a system of national education. Increased dexterity; greater power of concentration; superior trustworthiness; quickness in discovering a new industrial process and in learning how to use a new machine, are some of the many advantages which the labourer whose mind has been trained generally possesses over one who has grown up in ignorance. From all these considerations it follows that educated is much cheaper than uneducated labour; this difference in the relative cost of the two kinds of labour becomes each year more distinctly marked, because the success of industry depends to an increasing extent upon the skill of the workman and upon the excellence of the machinery employed. In the keen and close competition between different countries success will more and more depend upon the general intelligence of the workman. What has been said about labour in different parts of the same country, applies equally to the general industrial condition of distinct communities; for it can be shewn that labour is often the most costly in those countries where wages are the lowest. Thus it seems, quoting the authority of the chairman of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, that many trades of which that locality once had almost an exclusive monopoly, have gradually passed away to the United States. Not many years since nearly all the locks which were used throughout the world were manufactured in the neighbourhood of

Birmingham; at the present time, however, the material of which the locks are made is sent from Staffordshire to America; the locks are manufactured in America, then exported back again to England at such a price as to undersell us in our own market. America does not obtain this singular success in industrial competition by paying lower wages; labour, on the contrary, receives a considerably higher remuneration in the United States than in England, but the greater skill possessed by the more educated American workman causes his labour to be cheaper.

By such facts as these it is demonstrated that commercial supremacy cannot be maintained by any country if her educational condition becomes less advanced than that of neighbouring and competing nations. In support of this proposition it is only necessary to remark that with improved education labour becomes more efficient; when its efficiency is increased all the agents of production become more productive; a greater amount of wealth is yielded by the same expenditure of labour and capital; the cost of production is in this way diminished, and all commodities become cheaper. Not only do the general body of consumers reap an advantage, but home and foreign trade both rapidly expand; the home trade becomes more active, because as commodities are cheapened the demand for them increases, and the foreign trade is developed because we can offer our goods on more favourable terms in the general markets of the world. But the advantage does not stop here; it is not only the general body of consumers who are benefited. If labour becomes more efficient more wealth is produced, and wages and profits are both augmented.

In addition to such direct advantages as those just described, which are to be traced to a more general cultivation of the intellectual faculties, there are many other consequences of scarcely less importance, which may be regarded as the more indirect results of the same agency. It has been pointed out, when speaking of the Law of Settlement, that the prosperity of a country is most materially affected by any circumstance which impedes the free migration of labour; this is one of the many mischievous tendencies exerted by our Poor Laws. The stagnation of trade, however, is only in part due to this cause. Thousands are so entirely deficient in enterprise that a very considerable pecuniary inducement has no effect in drawing them away from their own homes. It is found, as might be expected, that the labourers who are most ignorant are those whom it is most difficult to move; this is the reason why in different parts of the country the variations in agricultural wages are much greater than in any other industry; the permanent difference in wages in adjoining counties often amounts to as much as 20 or 30 per cent. This could not continue if labour migrated more freely. Wages are much more uniform in those trades where a more skilled and generally better educated class of workmen are employed: the whole nation must manifestly suffer if labour does not pass to those localities where it is most wanted, but remains in places where it creates a burden by its redundancy. Still more striking benefits result when labour not only freely migrates to different parts of the same country, but when there is also

a spontaneous and judicious emigration. If the prospect of earning higher wages will not induce many of our least enterprising labourers to move into an adjoining county, it is of course only to be expected that still greater advantages will fail to attract them to distant countries. Our agricultural labourers are the emigrants whom the colonies particularly need, and they are also the class who would gain the most by emigration. Where fertile land is so abundant that vast tracts of it are unoccupied, agriculture must be the most profitable industry to follow. Australia, for instance, will not be able, in consequence of the dearness of labour there—at any rate for some time—to compete with England in manufacturing industry. In agriculture, however, cheap and abundant land more than compensates for highly paid labour. Our rural labourers are so devoid of enterprise that they remain in this country half starved upon 9*s.* or 10*s.* a week, although in the colonies a most prosperous career is offered to them. As long as they remain at home they have little chance of improving their condition; as they begin, so will they end, monotonously toiling for a miserable pittance. In Australia, or in the United States, they would be able by the most ordinary thrift to save sufficient to purchase a farm, and thus be raised above the vicissitudes of want. As they become more intelligent they will feel less disinclined to move, and they will be able to appreciate the disadvantages of their present lot. Emigration of the most useful kind will thus be stimulated; surplus labour will be drawn away from our own country; and a benefit

will in this way be conferred upon those who are left behind. But this does not represent the whole of the advantage; the new countries which are developed by our emigrants afford a profitable market for our manufactures, and in return we obtain what to a thickly peopled country is most important, namely, additional supplies of food.

Not only would a most desirable emigration be promoted by the general diffusion of education, but by the same agency many grave evils would be remedied and many perplexing social problems would be solved. Allusion has already been made to the necessary connection between ignorance and intemperance. It is impossible to exaggerate the mischief resulting from drunkenness; it is the besetting sin of our working-classes. But all experience shows that people cannot be made moral by Act of Parliament; if they desire to drink to excess they will do so in spite of the most severe enactments against it. The Prohibitory Liquor Law, which was passed in some of the New England States, has proved to be a signal failure. There is only one way of curing intemperance, and that is to diffuse amongst the people a taste for rational and intellectual pleasures. Then, again, it is useless to expect any general improvement in the dwellings of the poor until there is such an advance in their notions of comfort and refinement that they will refuse to live in their present miserable dwellings. The agricultural labourers in Northumberland are highly intelligent and well paid; they now refuse to be housed in the wretched hovels

which used to prevail in that county; the natural consequence is, as we find in the Report of the Agricultural Commission, that a Northumberland landlord finds it as essential to have good cottages as he does to have suitable farm-buildings; if there are not proper cottages for the labourers it is difficult to let the farm, because the farmer knows that all the best labourers would refuse to work for him unless they were comfortably and decently housed. In those counties, however, where the condition of the labourers is the lowest, not only is there no necessity for the landowner to build good cottages, but even if he does so he finds that little advantage results. People who from their earliest childhood have been accustomed to herd together are conscious of no harm or disgrace; if therefore they are provided with a cottage that has an extra bed-room, they frequently let it to a lodger, and things become even worse than they were before.

Probably, however, the greatest good to be ultimately anticipated from education is to render possible the realization of higher forms of social industrial development. It seems to be too frequently supposed that the way in which industry is at present carried on is necessary and inevitable. If this were so, we might despair of future progress; it is impossible for a country to obtain a position of high social advancement if the various classes who are concerned in industry are as completely separated from each other by distinct pecuniary interests, as they are in England at the present time. The leading characteristic of our industrial system

is that the three requisites for the production of wealth are provided by three distinct classes. The land is supplied by the landowner, the capital is provided by the capitalist, and the labour is furnished by those who work for hire. Between these three classes there is the antagonism of opposing pecuniary interests; the landlord tries to obtain the highest rent for his land, and the capitalist endeavours to obtain the greatest amount of profits and to pay the lowest wages: the necessary capital and labour are supplied by two distinct classes, who, insead of being united by the bonds of a common pecuniary interest, generally act towards each other as if they were parties contending over a closely contested bargain. The employer strives to buy labour as cheaply as possible; the employed equally endeavour to sell it as dearly as possible. This struggle often ends in bitter hostility; an industrial war is waged which paralyses trade, and inflicts incalculable loss, not only upon the parties engaged in the dispute, but upon the whole community. The evil, however, is not simply confined to the mischievous consequences which ensue from an open rupture. There must constantly be a deadening influence depressing industry, as long as that antagonism of interest continues which now exists between employers and employed. Men cannot be generally expected to put forth their best efforts unless they feel that they have a direct advantage in doing so. No complaint is more frequently heard amongst employers than that workmen are careless of their masters' interests; they are listless and apathetic;

they often do not labour with a will, and they have constantly to be watched and superintended. The cost of labour thus becomes greatly increased, and a very considerable outlay has to be incurred in overlooking workmen who cannot be trusted, because they care little about their masters' interests. The expense which this overlooking entails is often a most serious tax upon industry. Suppose that twenty workmen, receiving £1 a week, are superintended by a foreman who receives £2 a week; this salary is equivalent to one-tenth of the amount paid in wages. If the workmen could be trusted, the foreman would not be required, and there would be a saving of 10 per cent. on the cost of labour.

On every side we are met with evidence of the mischief produced by the conflict between capital and labour. In every trade except agriculture, where the labourers have not sufficient intelligence to combine, the workmen band themselves together into trades'-unions, and the avowed object of these organizations is to protect themselves against what are supposed to be the conflicting interests of their employers. Trades'-unions are often denounced as if they were simply the results of perverse folly, and as if they were chiefly supported by the most misguided workmen. It can, however, be easily shown that trades'-unions are a natural out-growth of our existing industrial economy, and until this economy is fundamentally changed their influence is sure rapidly to extend. For it is to be remarked that those of our artisans who are most intelligent are the most earnest advocates of trades'-unions.

In a highly skilled industry, such as mechanical engineering, the trade's-union is all powerful, whereas we have seen agricultural labourers are far too ignorant to have ever formed such organizations. In saying this it is not to be supposed that all the opinions which are held by trades'-unionists are so just as to indicate high intelligence. The leaders of trades'-unions are generally men who possess great natural ability, and who have risen to a position of influence amongst their fellows in spite of the disadvantages of a very defective mental training. Able men who are at the same time imperfectly educated, are sure to mix up with much that is true in their opinions much that is equally false. Trades'-unionists, for instance, have long since accurately ascertained the advantages which they derive from combined action; but they have often used their organizations to attempt various things, some of which are impracticable and others distinctly mischievous. An effort has thus not unfrequently been made to secure a particular wage independently of the state of trade. The wage thus fixed upon may be so high as unduly to reduce the employer's profits; his business may thus become so unremunerative that it does not answer his purpose to carry it on; the particular branch of industry leaves the locality where it is thus trammelled, and consequently the workmen who impose the restriction are thrown out of employment. It has sometimes happened that the trades'-unionists have combined to prevent the introduction of machinery; if they succeed in the attempt they are sure to drive the industry to

some other locality, or to some other country where there is no obstacle to the use of the machine. A better intellectual training will prevent workmen falling into such errors; there is no reason why they should not acquire a sound knowledge of the principles of economic science.

Many of the abuses of trades'-unions not only imply ignorance, but also indicate an absence of a due appreciation of justice. When any class has recognized the advantage of united action there is sure to be considerable danger that the combinations will not be entirely voluntary, but that force will be used to support them. Individual liberty may thus be sacrificed by the introduction of social terrorism. There will be always a danger of this until such an intellectual and moral advance occurs that general recognition is secured for the right which all men and women possess to engage in any employment in which their faculties best qualify them to excel. No principle is more frequently disregarded than this. Each trade and each profession tries to be as exclusive as possible; workmen combine to limit the number of apprentices; solicitors succeeded in getting an Act of Parliament passed which forbids anyone of their body having more than two articled pupils at the same time. Men have constituted themselves into one vast trades'-union to prevent women competing against them in a large number of employments. There can be no reason to hope that this exclusive policy will be discontinued until there is a more general appreciation of the elementary principles,

of justice. Nothing will more tend to bring this about than raising women to their just position; for the sense of justice can never be very keen when half the human race are taught from their childhood to be unjust to the other half, on the ground that right is only conceded to those who have the power to secure it for themselves. Important progress will be made towards conferring upon women equality of rights if a measure of national education shall give to all equal opportunities of intellectual training.

From these remarks it appears that extended education would correct some of the existing abuses of combination, but would at the same time render the organization of labour much more general; because many who have not now the requisite intelligence to combine would then be able to do so. It can scarcely be doubted that this will be the case when the advantages which combination confers are taken into consideration. The existing relations between employers and employed imply a pecuniary bargain. When workmen combine they are much more likely to adjust this bargain on favourable terms to themselves than if they had no power of organized action; it is well known that in each branch of industry there is generally a sufficient unity of action amongst the employers in a locality to secure an uniform rate of wages; thus, farmers in a district agree to pay certain wages, and the agreement is generally as faithfully obeyed as if it were enforced by law. The same remark holds true with regard to manufacturing industry; it is often, for instance, stated in the newspapers that the

Lancashire mill-owners or the Staffordshire iron-masters have met, and have decided to advance or reduce wages by 5, or by 10 per cent. The decision thus come to is as scrupulously observed by the employers as the mandate of the most perfectly organized trade's-union. This being the case it will be at once seen that labourers would be placed in a most disadvantageous position, if they did not exercise any power of combination.

Suppose, for example, that in consequence of an increased demand the cotton-trade becomes more prosperous; larger profits are realized, and the manufacturers agree, after consulting together, to raise wages by 5 per cent. An operative who considers such an advance to be quite inadequate, goes to his employer and says he has been so unfairly treated that he shall refuse to work unless he obtains an advance in his wages of 10 per cent. The employer, knowing that the operative cannot obtain higher wages in the district, at once feels himself to be master of the situation. He may, in fact, say to the operative, If you discontinue working for me, you will not be able to obtain higher wages from any other person in the locality engaged in the same trade, and you cannot resort to any other employment without sacrificing much of the advantage resulting from your acquired skill. The operative, having no resources to fall back upon, accepts the terms that are offered to him, knowing that he can gain nothing by continuing the struggle. The position of affairs will, however, be most materially changed if the operatives are able to adopt concerted action. Suppose they form themselves into a perfectly organized

trade's-union, and agree to follow whatever line of conduct their leaders may recommend; three or four delegates representing the whole society are deputed to inform the employers that the operatives are not satisfied with the advance which is offered to them, and that they have unanimously decided to discontinue work unless their wages are raised by 10 per cent. The employers, having no longer to deal with isolated individuals, must be prepared either to concede the advance, or for a time to close their manufactories. The organization of the operatives is so complete that no fresh supply of labour can be immediately obtained; for much time must elapse, and considerable expense must be incurred, before new labour can be so trained as to acquire the requisite skill. If the manufactories are closed a great loss is inflicted on the employers; this loss is in no way diminished by the circumstance that cessation from work involves still more serious consequences to the workmen. It must, moreover, be borne in mind that the manufactories will be closed at a time when trade is becoming active, and when the largest profits are likely to be realized. The employers, therefore, will have every inducement to avoid the threatened conflict, and will be prompted to concede the advance demanded if they can possibly afford to do so. It is, therefore, obvious that when labourers combine they are placed in a much better position to adjust on favourable terms the bargain by which wages are determined.

It may perhaps be argued that the labourers must have lost more than they have gained by combination, because they have been unsuccessful in the great majority

of strikes. It is no doubt true that in these contests they are generally vanquished by their employers: this is in a great measure due to the superior resources possessed by the capitalist; they have often saved sufficient to be independent of their business, whereas the funds of the wealthiest trade's-union would be exhausted if its members were on strike for many months. The ill-success of the workmen in these struggles is not solely due to inferior resources, they are bad strategists, for they most frequently embark upon a strike at the very time when they are least likely to gain a triumph. It will be observed that the great majority of strikes occur, not when trade is active and wages are rising, but when trade is dull and wages are falling. It is at once obvious that if employers refuse to make a reasonable advance in wages when trade is prosperous, a most severe pressure can be brought to bear upon them by their workmen. A strike at such a time would cause work to be discontinued when employers were anxious to do as large a business as possible; whereas a refusal to work is often of little consequence, so far as the employers are concerned—sometimes it is even advantageous, when trade is extremely depressed.

There is also another reason why a most fallacious estimate would be formed of the effects of combination, if a comparison were made of the loss caused by unsuccessful strikes with the gain secured by those which are successful. In the great Preston strike of 1854 the workmen did not succeed in carrying their point; 17,000 cotton operatives struck for a rise of 10 per cent. in their

wages; the struggle lasted thirty-six weeks; through a long and severe winter the operatives with their wives and families endured the utmost privations. It has been calculated, making due allowance, not only for the loss of wages, but also for the amount subscribed by other workmen, that this strike cost the operatives not less than half a million; and in the end they resumed work without having one of their demands conceded. It must not, however, be supposed that this half-million was money thrown away so far as the interest of labour was concerned; the workmen engaged in an important branch of industry demonstrated by this strike that they had the capacity and the inclination to combine; this was a fact which employers were not afterwards rash enough to disregard; they were in fact told that if at any time they attempted to extort too much from their operatives, they might be met with a combined resistance, which, by compelling them to close their manufactories, would inflict upon them severe pecuniary loss. When, therefore, the power of combination has been proved, much is readily granted which before would be sternly refused. This is well understood by the more intelligent workmen. It may, therefore, be confidently anticipated that with the spread of education, labour will become organized in every industry. If this should be the case there are those who think that education, instead of improving the condition of things, will make it worse than it was before; it will be urged that the existing trades'-unions produce great mischief, and that the trade of the country could scarcely survive if they became widely extended

both in influence and numbers. But, when it is said that trades'-unions produce great mischief, there is confusion between cause and effect. These societies are not the cause of hostility between employers and employed, they would not be called into existence if there were no hostility. Labour and capital both form separate organizations, because our industrial system is such that they possess two distinct and antagonistic interests. The union of capital and labour would remove this antagonism, and would render it no longer necessary for employers and employed to form themselves into rival combinations, in order to secure adequate protection from each other.

It has been already remarked that there is no reason why the capital which labour requires should not be provided by the labourers themselves; if this were done a complete union between capital and labour would be established, and the antagonism of opposing interests would cease. Various industrial experiments have been at different times tried, based upon establishing an union, more or less complete, between capital and labour. Although these experiments have often failed, yet some of them have been successful enough to prove that when people become sufficiently advanced for their general adoption, the greatest of all social and economic reforms will have been achieved. When all the capital is provided by the labourers themselves there is complete co-operation. In a subsequent chapter it will be shewn that although several French co-operative societies have obtained remarkable success, yet at the present time

there are in England very few industrial concerns conducted on strictly co-operative principles. The many unsuccessful attempts which have been made to establish them prove how much must yet be done before industry can be carried on in such a manner as will yield to the community the greatest happiness and prosperity. As co-operation is probably the highest form of industrial development, it is likely that advances will be made towards it by successive steps; it would seem, for instance, from various successful experiments lately carried out, that allotting to labour a certain share of profits is perhaps the change which will be first effected in our industrial system. When the employed obtain, in addition to their wages, a certain share of the profits which are realized, there is established what is termed a co-partnership of industry. From a description which will be subsequently given of several co-partnership schemes, it will be shewn that this plan effects a great improvement in the relations between employers and employed, and probably prepares the way for a more perfect system, based on pure co-operation.

It is obvious from all that has just been said that the training of even our best educated workmen is so imperfect, that they rarely succeed in establishing improved industrial relations; they consequently continue to be depressed by the radically bad system now existing. But if this remark holds true with regard to our more advanced workmen, it is obvious that national education should secure something far more than the elementary instruction of the whole people. Progress in civilization,

if it means anything, should ultimately secure for all men and women sufficient leisure for the full development of their intellectual faculties. Nothing throws a darker shade over the constantly augmenting wealth of this country than the circumstance that those who live by daily toil have seldom to work a smaller number of hours than formerly. Our existing economy seems in every respect to be characterized by the most glaring inequalities; not only is the distance widening between extreme wealth and extreme poverty, but there are thousands who have so little to do that spare time is a burden to them, whilst there are tens of thousands whose labour is so incessant that they have little or no leisure for intellectual pursuits. Not only is this the case, but stupid children, if their parents are wealthy, have large sums expended in providing them with an education from which they cannot derive advantage, whilst half the amount expended upon some children of the poor might develop great natural powers which are now dormant, and might thus prevent a considerable amount of genius being lost to mankind.

Some idea may be formed of the vast waste of power now taking place, when it is remembered that in a country like our own a great majority of those who are born have no reasonable chance of using the powers with which they are endowed. The child of the labourer must usually follow the same life as his father, although he may possess a capacity which would qualify him to obtain a high place in literature, science, or art. There are many, who under favourable circumstances might have occupied a foremost position in the nation,

who are now performing some mere manual labour. Nothing can more conclusively illustrate the prevalence of bad economic arrangements than the fact that men and women have rarely an opportunity of devoting themselves to that work which they are best qualified to perform. Everyone would appreciate the fatuity of putting a horse which has the speed of a racer to plough, or to draw some heavy burden; the speed, which under some circumstances gives great value to a horse, is absolutely thrown away when strength and not quickness is wanted. A man would be considered to have almost lost his senses if he employed a costly race-horse to do what could be better done by a slower, stronger and much cheaper animal. This, however, is exactly analogous to what is constantly happening with regard to men and women. There are many toiling year after year in some deep and unwholesome mine, many who have to labour with the regularity of a machine, many trudging monotonously day by day after the plough who might have become great discoverers in science, or might in other ways have added to the achievements of the nation, if they could have enjoyed the same intellectual training which numbers to whom it is offered throw away.

In the present state of things we are prodigal of nature's gifts; the resources of the country are recklessly squandered, because there can be little organization when it seems to be pre-arranged that the majority should have their powers cramped and confined within artificial limits. According to our present social arrangements scarcely any free scope is afforded for individuality. The careers

of men and women are almost unalterably fixed before they are born. One man is born a peer and another a ploughman; and each must through life run in the groove that has been prepared for him, however unfitted for it his natural faculties may render him. To leave the prescribed course requires from him an energy, a perseverance and a devotion, which otherwise employed might have produced positive results of the greatest value to himself and to mankind. This is even far more strikingly the case with women than with men. A woman, whatever may be her position in life, is generally restrained either by custom or by law from devoting herself to those pursuits in which she is most fitted to succeed. Until recently every possible impediment was thrown in her path if she desired to enjoy a high education. The task is even now sufficiently difficult, and as yet she is entirely cut off from sharing the great educational endowments possessed by the nation. Laws have been hitherto exclusively made by men, who, exhibiting towards women all the worst characteristics of the most misguided trades'-unionists, have excluded them by law from many employments and professions. All these considerations, taken in conjunction with the fact that the best amongst the working-classes prove themselves unqualified as yet for the highest form of industrial economy, should convince us that in securing the elementary instruction of all, the education problem is not solved, the fringe of a great question is little more than touched. Not only is it essential to raise the average intellectual training of the whole community, but it is equally important to remove

those obstacles which now prevent large numbers of all classes and both sexes from acquiring knowledge. Everyone would understand the wasteful prodigality of permitting a great tract of land to remain a useless and unhealthy morass, when by a little care and by a trifling outlay the land might be reclaimed and converted into fertile soil. But if a great part of this country had remained undrained and uncultivated, we should scarcely be more wasteful of our resources than we are in allowing the intellectual powers of so large a portion of the population to be undeveloped.

We ought not for one moment to rest content with the condition of the country, until all have a reasonable chance of being able to follow those pursuits in which they are most qualified to obtain success. The chief part of the disadvantages arising from inequalities in wealth would disappear, if the best education the country can afford were enjoyed by those children amongst the poor who possess the greatest intellectual power. Such an object would be powerfully promoted by a judicious administration of educational and charitable endowments. It is supposed that the annual income of the endowed schools is not less than £400,000; and various Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge have an annual income exceeding £600,000. Besides all this property, which may be regarded as specially intended to promote education, there is also an enormous amount of endowments devoted to a great variety of charitable purposes. Almost the whole of this sum, which, as at present expended, probably does more harm than good, might form a most

important addition to the funds that could be devoted to reward intellectual attainments. There are few towns which do not possess many charitable endowments; they are also frequently to be found in country parishes. It has been repeatedly proved that a locality is seldom benefited by such charities, but that, on the contrary, they often produce the gravest mischief; in some cases the amount distributed in charity is so considerable as to attract the pauperism of the neighbourhood, and thus a town becomes to a great extent permanently pauperised. The patronage connected with the distribution of charities has often been the source of jobbery and of political corruption. In numerous instances the most improper and demoralizing conditions are enforced upon the recipients of charity; sometimes customs which are obsolete and onerous are imposed. When, moreover, it is remembered that these charitable funds seldom reward the provident, but are, on the contrary, regarded as a possible refuge for the imprudent, it can scarcely be doubted that the greatest good would result, if, as a general rule, they were devoted to reward intellectual attainments.

The principle to be kept steadily in view in administering educational endowments, is that they should be employed to lessen as far as possible the obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge which are due to poverty. The Endowed Schools Bill, which has been lately passed, will enable much to be done in this direction; it contemplates the establishment of three grades of schools; it is proposed to attach to each grade various exhibitions and scholarships, by the aid of which the poor boy who may

have the ability to obtain them in open examination will be able to pass from the lowest to the highest grade school, and ultimately to the universities. He will there be able to compete on perfectly equal terms for scholarships and fellowships; he may thus obtain, as his reward for intellectual distinction, an income which will enable him to start on any career in which he may be most likely to achieve success. When such reforms are fully carried out, the highest culture will be much more generally diffused, and a vast amount of mental power which is now wasted because it is undeveloped, will be called into activity. As yet, however, no statesman seems to have either the capacity or the courage to attempt such comprehensive reforms. The English people dislike nothing so much as a thorough policy; they in general cordially approve a compromise which settles scarcely anything, but which leaves the carrying out of the most important changes to the uncertain and often unwise decisions of local authorities. The Endowed Schools Bill, excellent in its intentions, will fail to reach many grave abuses; and the so-called National Education Bill which passed in 1870 is so partial and local in its operation, that it may effect great results in one town, whilst for miles around, including both town and country, everything may remain just in the same condition as before. On no question, however, can it be more unfortunate that legislation should exercise only a partial and fitful influence. The social, moral and material condition of those towns in which the education of the people is secured will be constantly liable to be deteriorated by the

ignorance which is permitted to grow up in the surrounding districts. There might, for instance, be a general prevalence of increased prudential habits, in consequence of a greater amount of intellectual activity. From this greater prudence there would result a rise in wages; population would be kept within due limits; and there would consequently be a general advance in the average standard of living. Unless, however, the whole country participated in the change, it would be impossible for the improvement to be maintained. The higher wages would attract labour from those localities where prudential habits had not been encouraged by education.

From these considerations it appears that no measure can improve the condition of the poor unless it is general in its operation; its influence must not be restricted to one locality or to one class. If, for instance, those who are at the very bottom are not reached; they will by recklessness and improvidence diffuse amongst those just above them the germs of future wretchedness; the process will be repeated, and thus the whole mass will become leavened. Therefore all schemes of social and material reform must fail if they attempt to be partial and exclusive in their influence. Philanthropy should consequently be as wide in its influence as possible. The time may perhaps come, although probably it is very remote, when labour will migrate almost as freely from country to country as capital does now. Such free migration of labour would cause each country to be more directly interested in the moral and material advancement of other nations; thus,

English workmen would be attracted to France, and French workmen would be attracted to England, by the labour-market being more favourable in the one country than in the other. Under these circumstances it is obvious that the English might be injured by the improvidence of the French; or the French might be injured by the improvidence of the English. Suppose, for example, that through increased prudence the general condition of the French greatly improved whilst the English remained in a stationary state. The increased remuneration obtained by the French labourer would gradually attract English labourers, and thus an influence would be brought into operation to reduce wages in France to the level determined by the greater improvidence assumed to prevail in England. It is, therefore, probable that mankind will ultimately be more and more closely united in a brotherhood of common interest. Even at the present time it is not only the poor who are injured by poverty; it is not only the pauper who suffers from pauperism; poverty and pauperism, in endless ramifications, affect the whole community. Just in the same way, it is not only the ignorant who are injured by ignorance; those who are uneducated depress the condition of those who are educated; and in time it will come to pass that each nation will be directly concerned in the social, moral and material prosperity of every other nation with which it has intimate intercourse.

Reference has frequently been made in this chapter to the grave defects in our present industrial system.

It has been stated that the most serious mischief results from the antagonism of interest which is so prominent a characteristic of the relations now existing between capital and labour. It has been shewn that this antagonism would be greatly diminished by the adoption of the principle of copartnership, which confers upon the labourer a share of the profits yielded by his industry. All remedies, however, must be inadequate which do not establish a complete union between capital and labour: this is effected when the capital which industry requires is supplied by the labourers themselves. With few exceptions, no scheme based upon perfect co-operation of capital and labour has been able in this country to secure permanent success. This fact has already been adduced as evidence of the defective training of our industrial classes; the subject will, however, be much more fully explained in the following chapter, specially devoted to copartnership and co-operation.

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CHAPTER V.

COPARTNERSHIP AND CO-OPERATION.

After the remarks previously made it is scarcely necessary to repeat that industrial progress can be most accurately measured by the extent to which the conflict of interest now existing between employers and employed is diminished. It is vain to expect any marked improvement in the general economic condition of the country as long as the production of wealth involves a keen conflict of opposing pecuniary interests. The force which ten men can exert may be completely neutralized, if they are so arranged as to contend against, instead of assisting, each other. Similarly, the efficiency of capital and labour must be most seriously impaired, when, instead of representing two agents assisting each other to secure a common object, they spend a considerable portion of their strength in an internecine contest. All experience shews that there can be no hope of introducing more harmonious relations, unless employers and employed are both made

to feel that they have an immediate and direct interest in the success of the work in which they are engaged.

It may, no doubt, be said that at the present time the employed have this direct interest in the prosperity of their employers; for if employers are ruined, the fund from which labourers obtain their wages will be destroyed. In this sense it is true that labourers indirectly participate in the prosperity of the capitalists. The larger the profits of capital are, the greater will be the amount of capital invested in industry; the wage fund will consequently be augmented; and sooner or later the average remuneration of labour will be increased. But the extra remuneration which may be thus ultimately given to a labourer comes to him so indirectly, and often after so long an interval, that it is difficult for him to connect the cause and effect. There are, no doubt, cases in which a sudden increase in the prosperity of the trade in which he is engaged causes an immediate addition to his wages. But this sudden increase in the activity of his trade always arises from some extraneous or accidental circumstance which the labourer is powerless to produce or control. In most cases, however, additional prosperity enjoyed by his master is not immediately accompanied with a sufficiently distinct improvement in his own lot to make him feel that his own and his employer's interests are identical. Facts are constantly happening which must tend amongst the general mass of the people to shake to its very foundations all belief in this identity of interest. Is it not an event of every-day occurrence

that whilst the greatest fortunes are accumulated by the employers, there is no perceptible change in the condition of those whom they employ? The public press, for instance, often tells us how some ironmaster or some manufacturer has become a millionaire, but not a word is said about any advance in the condition of those without whose labour such vast wealth could not be accumulated. The employer may grow richer and richer; his style of living may become more and more extravagant; far and wide it may be known that there is scarcely any limit to the sums which he can spend in every luxury, and yet those who labour for him end life as they began it; they do not participate in his prosperity; they toil early and late, and find it difficult to obtain a comfortable maintenance. Their leisure time does not increase, the burden of their work does not become less severe, and their houses are not more comfortable.

Scarcely a day passes without some event occurring which must go far to destroy in the minds of the working-classes that there is any identity of interest between them and those by whom they are employed. As I am writing these pages an investigation is taking place into the causes of the late deplorable accident at Harrow, on the London and North-Western Railway. From one end of the kingdom to the other the great wealth and prosperity of this railway are well known, and the property is steadily increasing in value. The directors of this railway are commercial potentates, who have at their disposal far more patronage than

often falls to the share of a Cabinet Minister. They thus obtain an amount of political influence which not unfrequently ensures them a seat in Parliament. Engineers, contractors, barristers and solicitors have made splendid fortunes out of this railway; to the casual observer everything appears to be carried on upon a scale which betokens prosperity. The entrance hall to their London station is palatial; the carriages are luxurious. What a contrast must all this present to those who are employed to superintend the working of this railway. In the course of the investigation into the causes of the Harrow accident, a signal-man was examined who was stationed near the spot where the collision took place. He stated in his evidence that every other week he remained at his post from six o'clock in the morning till six o'clock in the evening; the alternate week he was on duty from six in the evening till six in the morning. He had only one day's rest in fourteen, instead of the customary one in seven. He had to signal more than a hundred trains a day; to superintend three telegraphs and twenty levers; his work was so responsible that the lives of hundreds of people would have been placed in jeopardy if for one moment he relaxed his constant watchfulness. For this unremitting and most responsible work he received the sum of 19*s.* a week. It was further proved in evidence that another man, who signalled the train just previous to the fatal collision, came upon duty at five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and had to remain at his post until eight o'clock on the following

Sunday morning. At a recent meeting of the shareholders of the Midland Railway, it was shewn that the state of things just described on the London and North-Western line is not a solitary instance of the manner in which the servants of a Railway Company are overworked. It was stated at this meeting by Mr M. T. Bass, M.P. that there had been cases on the Midland Railway in which the drivers had been kept on their trains 23 and 29 hours at a stretch. The firemen and guards had also been kept to their work for a corresponding period. Mr Bass had received a representation from the drivers on the Midland line, complaining that they were rendered incapable of adequately performing their duties for the safety of the public and for the interests of the Company. The pointsmen also had made a very earnest complaint to the directors of the excessive hours they were employed and the inadequate pay they received. But they had obtained no redress. Mr Bass concluded his remarks by pointing out that at the present time the Company was paying £40,000 a year as compensation for accidents, and that they killed men at the rate of one a week. In edifying contrast with the statements of Mr Bass, the chairman at the same meeting declared the dividend to be very satisfactory and encouraging. "The accounts seemed to him to disclose an elasticity and a growth of traffic which would severely tax the energies of the Company to deal with." Mr Bass moved for a committee to enquire into the complaints of the railway servants, on which the directors, the shareholders and the employers were to be jointly represented. It is

almost superfluous to add that the motion met with no support and consequently fell to the ground. When such facts as these are repeatedly coming to light, the working classes can arrive at no other conclusion than that there is no identity of interest between them and their employers. The connection between the prosperity of the latter and any advance in their own welfare, is far too remote to produce any of the sympathy arising from the sentiment of a common interest. It is obvious that much would be done to create such sympathy if labourers were not simply the recipients of wages, but if they also had conferred upon them a certain share of the profits yielded by their industry.

When it is arranged that labour participates in profits, a copartnership of industry is said to be established. One of the first and best known copartnership experiments was that which was carried out nearly a quarter of a century since by M. Le Claire, a house decorator in Paris. This experiment has been so frequently described that it is not necessary to allude to it in any detail. Many of the remarks, however, which we have made in reference to the antagonism between capital and labour, are strikingly corroborated by the circumstances which led to the adoption of this copartnership scheme by M. Le Claire. The nature of his business was such that his workmen were scattered over different parts of Paris, no adequate supervision could be therefore exercised over them. They were not sufficiently interested in the success of their work to put forward their utmost exertions to do it well; they were consequently listless and

apathetic; the labour was inefficient and costly. Not only was a very heavy loss thus inflicted upon their employer, but he was subject to constant annoyance from his customers complaining of the indolent and careless way in which his workmen did their work. But does not this account of a particular case accurately describe the industrial relations now generally prevailing? If this is so, it becomes of the utmost importance to enquire whether the remedy so successfully applied by M. Le Claire would be less successful if generally adopted. This employer, clearly perceiving the nature of the evil to be cured, told his workmen that he would pay them the ordinary wages current in the trade, and if by any extra exertions on their part his business were made more lucrative, they should share amongst them a portion of the additional profits. It is well known that the plan was eminently successful; the whole demeanour of the men was at once changed; the listlessness and apathy previously existing were replaced by a keen and active desire to do their work well in order that the profits might be made as large as possible.

It is difficult to understand why similar schemes have not been more frequently carried out. Wherever they have been tried, most satisfactory results have been secured. Some years ago Mr Briggs, who was the owner of extensive collieries at Methley, near Leeds, was harassed by constant disputes with his workmen. Probably in no branch of industry have so many angry differences arisen between employers and employed as in the coal trade. Strikes are of frequent occurrence.

Mr Briggs was in a state of chronic warfare with his men; he was a man of such great energy of character that no one fought out a strike with more unflinching determination. These constant conflicts caused the most serious loss both to him and his workmen; the profits of his business were greatly reduced. It was not, however, simply a pecuniary loss which he had to bear; he lived in a state of perpetual civil war; his life was so frequently threatened that he was often advised not to go to his mines unless he was accompanied by his wife, as it was thought that the men would forbear doing any violence if she were present. Things at last came to such a pass that he resolved to relinquish his business. On announcing his intention of doing so to his sons, one of them advised his father, before finally giving up the business, to endeavour to introduce some system of copartnership. With a view of effecting this object the following scheme was adopted. The business was converted into a joint-stock company whose capital was £135,000, in 9000 shares of £15 each. Two-thirds of these were retained by the owners of the colliery; the remaining one-third were offered to the workmen. It was further arranged that if, after setting aside a proper amount for wear and tear, the annual profits should exceed ten per cent., one-half of these extra profits should be allotted as an additional dividend to capital, and the remaining half should be distributed amongst the workmen in proportion to the wages earned by each individual. By this arrangement a more complete partnership was established between capital and labour

than existed in the scheme of M. Le Claire; for not only did each workman participate in the profits realized, but an opportunity was also offered to him of purchasing shares, and thus becoming the possessor of a certain portion of the capital embarked in the business. The experiment has been in every respect eminently successful; nothing can be more striking than the change effected in the relations between the workmen and the owners of the collieries; the angry recriminations, the bitter hostility, and the sullen discontent previously prevailing, are replaced by all the harmony of feeling which results when people are united by the bonds of a common interest. The most active leaders of many a hard-fought strike are now amongst the staunchest supporters and warmest advocates of this copartnership scheme; they have repeatedly expressed the opinion that so far as their own experience goes it seems to have provided a complete remedy for disputes between capital and labour.

One consequence inevitably follows from this improved method of carrying on industry. The heavy loss consequent upon strikes is avoided; labour and capital being also rendered much more efficient, the profits of the business greatly increase. This was strikingly the case in both the schemes which have been described. M. Le Claire has expressly stated that he found his experiment to be most remunerative; at the Methley Colliery profits rapidly advanced from the time that the copartnership principle was brought into operation. That this should be the case might have been

readily foreseen. Not only was the loss consequent on strikes and lockouts saved, but the workmen having now the powerful inducement of self-interest, laboured with far greater energy and effect. It has been proved from the labour registers which have been carefully kept at the Methley collieries that since the introduction of the copartnership principle the amount of work done in a day by each man has been greatly increased. All the operations in the mine are carried on with greater care, and consequently there is a very considerable saving in plant and material. It is an essential characteristic of these copartnership schemes that they benefit the labourer not at the expense of the capitalist; but, on the contrary, the extra remuneration received by the labourer is a measure of the additional profits given to the employer.

The very general misconception prevailing upon this point may be regarded as the chief cause which has hitherto retarded the progress of copartnership. The Royal Commission which lately investigated the subject of trades' unions and strikes received much important evidence relating to the Methley colliery. The Commissioners admitted that the scheme adopted at Methley, provided a complete remedy for strikes; but they expressed an opinion that the plan could never be extensively applied, because few employers would voluntarily submit to the sacrifice of allotting to their labourers a certain portion of their profits. If copartnership involved this sacrifice on the part of capitalists there would certainly be no hope of the principle being ever gene-

rally applied. But it cannot be too distinctly stated that the very essence of the principle consists in the fact that it is a partnership of advantage. The share of the profits allotted to labour does not represent any loss to the capitalist; on the contrary it is a measure of the additional profit gained by the employer. It must be borne in mind that the labourer obtains nothing beyond his ordinary wages until the average rate of profit current in the trade is secured by the employer.

If, for example, copartnership were applied to agriculture, the farmer who intended to adopt the principle ought in the first place to make a careful estimate of the amount of capital invested in his business; it would then be necessary to determine, by estimating his profits in previous years, what would be a fair return to the capital so embarked. Let it be assumed that his farm is 1000 acres, that his trade capital is £10,000, and that his average profits in previous years have been at the rate of 8 per cent., or £800 per annum. In order to provide against copartnership causing any loss to the farmer, it might be arranged that labourers should not participate in profits until a return of 10 per cent. had been secured upon capital. If such a plan were carried out it would then manifestly happen that the farmer by trying the experiment might gain, but would incur no risk of loss. If the principle proved inoperative, if labour were not made more productive through its influence, then the profits of the farm would be no more than they were before, and there would consequently be no bonus to distribute amongst the labourers. There is, however,

every reason to conclude that the additional efficiency given to labour in the case of the Paris house-decorators and the Methley colliers, would be more strikingly exhibited in the case of agricultural labourers. Farmers will themselves be the first to admit that there are probably no employers who suffer such serious loss in consequence of the listlessness, apathy, and carelessness of their workmen. In the United States it was a well established economic fact that slave labour could never be profitably applied to such agriculture as that which prevails in England. Slave labour cannot be profitably employed in any industry which cannot be carefully watched and overlooked. The experience of America shews that no employment in which the labourers are scattered over a wide area, or in which conscientious work combined with skill and intelligence are requisite, can be successfully conducted by the means of slave labour. From the very nature of the complaints most frequently heard from farmers and other employers, it may be concluded that the characteristic defects here attributed to slave labour belong in a modified form to our present economic system. Is it not constantly being said that the labourers are careless about their master's interests; that they will shirk their work if they can; and that they seldom put forth their best efforts? It of course follows that these defects produce the most serious consequences in those branches of industry where labour cannot be properly superintended and watched. The experience of the United States proves that this is particularly the case with regard to such agriculture as that which prevails

in England. We have therefore good grounds for saying that copartnership would probably be applied to agriculture with maximum advantage; if this were so a very considerable increase of profits must inevitably result; instead of the rate of profit being 8 per cent., as in the example above given, the rate may very probably advance to 14 or 15 per cent. If it be assumed that the profit is 15 per cent., the amount which would be brought under the principle of copartnership for distribution would be £500 per annum. This would manifestly be the case, because a profit of 10 per cent. is regarded as a first charge upon capital. If it were arranged that one-half the extra profit realized should be given as a bonus to labourers, the amount annually to be distributed amongst them would be £250. According to this hypothesis the farmer, instead of suffering any loss, would have his profits raised from 8 to 12½ per cent. It of course cannot be positively asserted that these figures represent with accuracy the results which would really occur. They are rather intended to indicate with greater clearness the nature of the advantage secured by the plan; they are also intended to prove that an employer who may embark on such an experiment may very probably secure a great pecuniary advantage for himself, and cannot, on the other hand, possibly suffer any loss.

Although copartnership has only in a very few instances been applied to all the employés of a business, yet partial applications of the principle are by no means uncommon. It is surprising that the excellent effects

produced even by these limited applications have not encouraged a much wider extension of the system. The fact has long been almost universally recognized that the most effectual way to secure the active energy and the best exertions of any particular person engaged in a business, is to stimulate in him a personal interest in the success of the undertaking, by conferring upon him a certain share of the profits. The managers of many of the most prosperous establishments in the country receive a certain share of profits in addition to a fixed salary. A well-known agriculturist lately told me that in consequence of a great portion of his time being occupied as a land-agent, he was obliged to leave a large farm which he rented and cultivated, chiefly to the management of a bailiff. For many years all the bailiffs whom he hired proved to be more or less unsatisfactory; when he was absent from home he never could feel confident that they would not neglect his interests. At length it was suggested to him that instead of simply paying his bailiff a fixed salary, he should receive in addition a certain small per-centage of the profits yielded by the farm. The plan was successful beyond all expectation; the bailiff worked with an energy and a zeal which he had never before displayed; the farmer was abundantly compensated for the small portion of profits thus relinquished. The experiment was for him a remarkably remunerative speculation; the business no longer caused him the anxiety he had before felt, for as he significantly remarked, "One who was before working as a paid servant, now became placed in the

position of a partner." Numerous other similar instances might be given. One of the College tutors of Cambridge lately told me that during the last two or three years he has been in the habit of giving a clerk whom he employs, in addition to a fixed salary, a certain per-centage of all the tutorial fees. The very best results have followed this arrangement. One of the most instructive experiments of the kind was carried out upon the Paris and Orleans Railway; the directors of this company, after paying the current rate of wages to their engine-drivers, their guards, their porters, and other employés, agreed to distribute in addition amongst them a certain per-centage of the profits realized. This railway is not only one of the best managed, but is also one of the most prosperous in the world. The directors express a most confident opinion that the greater zeal and activity stimulated in their employés far more than compensates the shareholders for the small share of profits which they consent to relinquish. The English are proverbially slow to receive a new idea; but perhaps some day the directors of such railways as the Midland and the London and North-Western may find it advantageous to follow the example of the Paris and Orleans Company, instead of underpaying and overworking their employés in the manner previously described.

It would appear, after the account which has been given of these various copartnership schemes, that there is no reason why the principle should not at the present time be very generally adopted. The same remark, however, does not hold true with regard to the imme-

diate application of the principle of co-operation. It would seem, as mentioned in the chapter on education, that the majority of English workmen are not yet sufficiently advanced for that perfect union between capital and labour which co-operation implies. As co-operation probably represents the highest form of industrial development, it is only reasonable to suppose that it will have to be reached by a gradual progress. Copartnership in its various forms probably indicates different stages in this progress. It may also be fairly concluded that it is necessary for the workmen to pass through these preliminary stages, in order that they may be properly trained for the higher industrial life which they will ultimately attain. Thus, one of the first and simplest changes to be introduced into our economic system, would be to confer upon labourers, in addition to their ordinary wages, a certain share of profits; the next advance might be the adoption of schemes similar in principle to the one so successfully carried out at the Methley collieries. In this case it will be remembered that the labourers not only participate in profits, but also have an opportunity of becoming owners of part of the capital invested in the business. By such an arrangement a closer union is effected between capital and labour, than when the workmen simply participate in profits. Although the union established between capital and labour is more complete, yet there is associated with such an arrangement a danger which does not affect copartnership in its simpler form. It is, for instance, obvious that a new conflict of interest may

arise between those labourers who have some capital invested in the business and those who have none; the former, not appreciating the nature of the benefit conferred by copartnership, may be desirous, in order to appropriate to themselves the whole of the profits realized, to prevent any portion of these profits being distributed among the other labourers. If they succeeded in such an attempt it is manifest that the scheme would at once be deprived of its essential advantages, and would be in fact converted into an ordinary joint-stock undertaking. As we proceed to describe the history of various co-operative societies which have proved unsuccessful, it will be shown that their failure may be generally attributed to the circumstance just indicated.

As previously stated, there are scarcely any successful trading establishments in England which are at the present time conducted on pure co-operative principles. This assertion may be considered at variance with the fact that many co-operative stores are rapidly increasing in prosperity. The Rochdale Pioneers' Society may be quoted, since in this case the business annually transacted amounts to more than £250,000; the capital embarked in the concern is £40,000, the profit upon which is more than 20 per cent. During the last few years the Civil Service Co-operative Store, and other similar institutions, have been established in London with equally satisfactory results. It can, however, be readily shown, that useful as such societies are, and important as are the benefits which they confer, yet they are not co-opera-

tive institutions in the sense in which we have employed the term. The Rochdale Pioneers' Society is simply a joint-stock company, a considerable portion of capital of which happens to be supplied by the working-classes. Its most distinctive peculiarity, and one of the chief reasons of its success, is its strict adherence to the ready-money principle. Anyone, whether a shareholder or not, can purchase commodities at the Rochdale Store at the ordinary retail price; the only condition enforced is that in every case all articles must be paid for before delivery. After a fixed dividend of 5 per cent. has been secured for capital the remaining profits are distributed amongst the customers. The purchaser receives at the end of each quarter a portion of these profits calculated on the amount which he has spent at the Store. Thus, if the dividend is 1*s.* in the £, the person who has expended £20 at the Store will receive a dividend of £1.

The advantages which such a Society confers have been so often described that it is not necessary to make any lengthened comments on the subject. The success of such schemes is no doubt mainly due to the ready-money principle being strictly followed. Nothing can be more mischievous than the facility with which credit is usually given in all retail business; tradesmen are obliged to charge a high price for their goods in order to compensate themselves for long credits, and for bad debts. The person who is willing to pay ready money is charged a very considerable additional sum, in order to compensate the tradesmen for those who either defer their payments, or who do not pay at all. The thrifty

and honest are thus heavily taxed for the imprudent and the dishonest; this, however, indicates only a part, and probably a small part, of the mischief produced. All who have any intimate acquaintance with the working-classes must have often felt that nothing tends to depress their condition so much as the facility with which they obtain credit; a man becomes bound to deal at the shop where he owes money, and he is also compelled to pay a high price for very inferior articles. It also generally happens that when a person once gets into debt he becomes so reckless that he feels he cannot be much worse off, and therefore might as well spend all that he can in drink, or in any other indulgence.

In addition to all these advantages which result from the abolition of credit, it is also evident that a co-operative store embodies a most admirable economic arrangement; it enables the distribution of wealth to be carried on in such a manner that the consumer obtains commodities almost at their wholesale price. The poverty of the very poor is often materially increased from the circumstance that no inconsiderable portion of their scanty income is wasted, in consequence of the manner in which it is spent. Probably no class pay such an extravagant price for the articles which they purchase as agricultural labourers who deal at small village shops; the goods, before they obtain them, have been bought and sold several times, and upon each transaction a certain addition must be made to the price in order to provide an adequate profit for the various dealers. Thus, the importer of tea sells it in the first instance

to the wholesale dealer; he sells it again to some large grocer in a country town, from whom it is bought by the village shopkeeper: the price is in this way ultimately often increased to the extent of even 30 or 40 per cent. Experience also shows that when a commodity passes through so many hands, it is much more likely in the end to be adulterated. The wastefulness and extravagance of the present method of conducting ordinary retail business is strikingly proved by some facts which have come to light in connection with the Civil Service Co-operative Store. In this case a different arrangement is adopted from that which prevails at the Rochdale Pioneers' Society; instead of charging the ordinary current retail prices, and then giving a drawback to the customers at the end of each quarter, the prices at which the articles are sold are much below the current rate; they are so adjusted as to give a fair rate of interest upon the capital invested. As a result of this management it is found that the prices at the Civil Service Store are, upon the average of all the articles sold, at least 20 per cent. lower than the prices charged at ordinary shops. There can be little doubt that tradesmen generally would be able to do business on the same low terms, if they carried on their business upon the ready-money principle. Tradesmen have in fact often said that they could not only adopt the price list of this society, but would also be able to obtain much larger profits than they now secure, if every article which they sold was paid for on delivery, and if they were saved other expenses, such as sending out for orders to their customers. It is therefore

probable that the result of applying co-operation to distribution will be gradually to introduce the ready-money principle into all retail transactions. If this were done the general resources of the country would be greatly economised; all commodities would be considerably cheapened; and, for reasons previously stated, the very poor would be those who would be most specially benefitted by the change.

The name Co-operative, when applied to these stores, is used in a popular and not in a strictly scientific sense. Co-operation properly signifies an union between capital and labour. This union does not form an essential characteristic of such an establishment as the Rochdale Pioneers' Society; those who are employed in this business as managers, clerks, porters, etc., are paid in the usual way, either by a fixed weekly wage, or by an annual salary; they do not necessarily, in any way, participate in the profits realized. Co-operation, from the fundamental conception implied in the term, must rather refer to the production than to the distribution of wealth. Suppose, for example, that a certain manufactory requires the labour of a hundred operatives, and a capital of £10,000. If a hundred operatives could be found who each possessed £100, which they were willing to invest in the concern, it is then obvious that the manufactory could be carried on with capital entirely supplied by the operatives themselves. The labourers being the owners of the capital, would possess as their rightful property all the profits realized. A complete union between capital and labour would be established;

these two interests, usually distinct, would be merged into one, and the business would be conducted on purely co-operative principles. The advantages which result, when such schemes are successfully carried out, can be readily indicated. The antagonism between capital and labour, which produces such incalculable mischief, altogether ceases to operate; the workmen, feeling that the entire results of their labour will be their own, are naturally stimulated to an energy and activity which are almost unknown when they are simply the recipients of ordinary wages. It has been repeatedly stated that the wretched condition of so large a portion of our population is to be either directly or indirectly traced to improvidence; nothing can more powerfully tend to make people reckless and imprudent than the feeling that they have little to gain by thrift and self-denial. Comments have already been made upon the disastrous influence which is in this way exercised by our present Poor Law; for parochial relief seldom helps those who are striving to help themselves. Besides the Poor Law, another circumstance which discourages prudential habits among the working classes, is the feeling that no amount of saving which it is possible for them to make will give them any reasonable prospect of rising in life. Suppose, for instance, that an artizan by dint of great efforts and of many sacrifices saved £100; the question then arises, what is he to do with it? He may of course invest it in the savings bank, and upon it he will obtain interest of about 1*s.* a week; this small addition to his income really makes little difference to him. Under such cir-

cumstances there is not a sufficiently powerful motive acting on working-men to induce them to be thrifty. A working-man is of course not obliged to put his money into the savings bank; he may take some small business, and thus commence trading on his own account. When, however, such a course is adopted, the chances of failure are so great that the man will very probably end by being much worse off than he was when working as an artizan. The reason of this is very obvious. The small shop, usually carried on with inadequate capital, is placed under a great disadvantage when competing with large concerns. Then, again, it usually happens that the artizan who becomes a shopkeeper knows little or nothing of his new occupation; the result of the change therefore generally is that pecuniarily he is much worse off than he was before; his hard-earned savings are often gradually lost; and he feels a constant anxiety and annoyance from being engaged in an occupation of which he has a most imperfect knowledge. It would therefore appear that no amount of saving which our labourers can ordinarily effect, will give them any reasonable chance of advancing their lot in life. They may become petty shopkeepers, but this, so far as our skilled workmen are concerned, should be regarded as a retrograde rather than as an onward movement.

We are thus led to the conclusion that nothing would exert a more powerful influence to diminish poverty and to raise the general condition of our labourers, as affording them an opportunity of using their savings as capital for the support of the industry in which they are engaged,

In recent times it has become more and more difficult for labourers in their individual capacity to carry on business upon their own account. In former ages a very considerable portion of the whole cultivated land of the country was occupied either by peasant cultivators or peasant proprietors; but owing to various causes, which will afterwards be explained, the small farms have been absorbed into large ones; the small properties have been aggregated into great estates. It is consequently becoming more hopeless for a rural labourer to look forward to be either a peasant cultivator, or a peasant proprietor. This absence of hope has perhaps done more than anything else to depress the condition of our agricultural population. Very similar remarks apply to our artizans who are engaged in manufacturing and other branches of industry. Before the triumphs of modern mechanical invention had been achieved by the genius of Watt, Arkwright, Crumpton and others, little machinery was used in our various manufactures; they were in fact, to a great extent, domestic; for in the days of hand-loom weaving, and of pillow lace-making, people could work just as well in their own homes as when gathered together in a large building. Each extension and improved application of machinery seems to increase the advantage of carrying on industry upon a large scale; manufactories and warehouses are consequently becoming more extensive and more costly, and the amount of capital needed for the successful conduct of a business represents a sum which is each year more hopelessly beyond the reach of working men individually to accu-

mulate. If therefore our present industrial system were to continue unchanged, the antagonism between capital and labour, instead of diminishing, would grow more marked, because each year it would seem to be more impossible for the labourer to advance himself in his own trade to the position of a capitalist.

Co-operation manifestly provides an escape from this dilemma, for it enables a business in which all the capital is supplied by the labourers to be conducted upon any scale, however large, which is most fitted to secure success. Thus an example has been given of a co-operative manufactory in which the necessary capital might be subscribed by a hundred labourers providing £100 each; if it were advantageous to double the size of this manufactory, there is no reason why the increased capital should not be supplied by two hundred labourers. In the same way, if co-operation were applied to agriculture, the farms could be adjusted to any size which might prove to be the most advantageous. Twenty labourers might, for instance, supply the capital and labour needed for a farm of 250 acres. If, owing to the introduction of some new machine, such, for example, as the steam cultivator, it became profitable to augment the size of farms, there is no reason why a co-operative farm, instead of being 250 acres, should not be double that size.

After these theoretical descriptions of co-operative institutions, it will be naturally asked whether the principle has ever been successfully applied, and whether it is ever likely to be generally introduced. The first of

these questions has already been partly answered, for in a previous chapter it was stated that in England co-operation when applied to productive industry has achieved but very partial and limited success. In France, however, many prosperous trading establishments have been conducted upon pure co-operative principles. After a brief description has been given of some of these successful institutions, we shall be better able to understand why the system has hitherto failed in England. Co-operation first assumed a prominent position in France during the memorable year of 1848. The revolution then effected was not so much a political movement as a vehement condemnation of the prevailing industrial system. In times of great excitement strange schemes are propounded, and wild things are said; but even when the popular fervour was at its height one principle could always be detected as influencing the impulses of the people, namely, an intense longing to discover, if possible, some means of escaping from that separation and conflict between capital and labour which so peculiarly characterises modern industry. Some attributed all the blame to competition; others relied upon Government intervention to introduce a better state of things; many proclaimed it to be the duty of the State to lend capital to those who had it not, and to provide work for those who were unemployed. Enough has already been said to show the impolicy of conceding these demands; it is, however, most important to observe that none of those workmen succeeded who obtained loans of capital from the State, and the National

workshops, destined to give work to the unemployed, proved to be abortive failures. Our workmen cannot bear too carefully in mind the lessons taught by this experience. There are indications of an increasing tendency to repose too much reliance upon State intervention; the Government is continually being pressed to do various things which ought to be left to private efforts. The disastrous failure of all the Parisian industrial schemes which obtained State assistance affords an instructive example of the evils produced by weakening the sentiment of self-reliance. Every business is liable to many fluctuations; periods of adversity are sure to occur when trade is dull and profits diminish. Those who rely either upon Government aid or upon any other extraneous assistance will at such times seek help from the Government, instead of striving by increased care and thrift to tide over the difficulty.

As previously stated, the only trading societies which in Paris obtained any permanent success were those which the workmen not only founded, but carried on by their own unaided efforts. These societies were generally begun upon the simplest possible scale, workmen at the outset often had no capital, but the difficulties with which they consequently had to struggle appeared to give them such an admirable training as almost to ensure future success. This however will be the more clearly perceived after describing the origin and progress of two remarkable co-operative societies which were established by Parisian workmen. At the end of the year 1852 a society of co-operative masons was formed in Paris consisting of

only seventeen members; at the out-set they had no capital. They consequently resolved to create a capital, by depositing in a common chest one-tenth of their daily earnings. At the end of 1854 they had gradually accumulated a capital of £680; and in 1860 the society consisted of 107 members, and the capital possessed by them was £14,500. They have been employed to erect many important buildings in Paris; they have secured a large business, not either through favour or through charity; they have entered fairly into the open field of competition, and they have obtained success because they have worked both cheaply and well. The organisation of this society seems calculated to develop the very best industrial qualities, and consequently labour and capital are applied with maximum efficiency. All the labourers employed by this society must also possess capital; by this arrangement the rival interests of capital and labour are merged into one, and everyone engaged in the concern is stimulated to the most energetic exertions by the feeling that those who labour, since they supply the capital, will be able to enjoy the entire fruits of their industry. The method adopted for the division of profits is extremely simple. The wages paid are those which are current in the trade; after a due provision has been made for wear and tear, and a proper sum has been set aside to form a reserve, the remaining profits are divided in the following manner. Two-fifths are apportioned as a dividend to capital; the other three-fifths constitute a bonus which is distributed amongst the labourers in proportion to the aggregate wages each

has earned; the most regular and highly skilled workmen consequently obtain the largest share of this bonus. This constitutes an additional stimulus to industrial activity.

Another similar society in Paris, namely, the co-operative Pianoforte Makers, has had a not less remarkable history. In 1848, fourteen pianoforte makers of Paris resolved to form themselves into an association. They were as poor as men could be; they had no capital, and scarcely any tools, and they were also refused any loan from the State. After bravely enduring the most severe hardships, they succeeded in saving £45; with this they determined to commence business. They at first rented a very small room in an obscure part of Paris. For many months they denied themselves every luxury; in fact it was impossible to live on more scanty or frugal fare. One incident will illustrate the difficulty of their position. They joyfully accepted an offer from a baker to purchase a piano for £19, and to pay them for it in bread. This bread was for a considerable time their chief means of support. All obstacles were however, one by one, surmounted; and their progress, though gradual, was steady and sure. In 1850 the members of the society increased to 32; they had left their first humble room, were then renting a commodious building, at £80 a year; at this time their stock was worth £1,600. Within the last few years they have become the owners of a large freehold manufactory, which is furnished with the most improved machinery; the business which they now annually transact exceeds £8000. This Pianoforte

association has obtained a well-deserved reputation for the excellence and cheapness of its work.

There are in France fifty societies conducted on strict co-operative principles. One of the most successful of these is a society of working spectacle-makers. It was established in 1849, and is now carrying on an extremely prosperous business of over £25,000 a year. The copartnership principle has also been extensively adopted in France and Belgium. At Chênée, near Liège, there is a society of zinc-workers, called the Société Anonyme de la Vieille Montagne. This concern employs 6500 hands; it has 17 branch establishments in Rhenish Prussia, France and Sweden. Labour is considered a portion of the capital invested, for which the workmen receive a regular per centage as wages, and further bonuses according to the profits of the concern. By this arrangement the remuneration of labour has in 12 years increased 45 per cent., and it is continually increasing.

It is instructive to enquire how it has happened that so few societies similar to those just described have been established in England. The failure of the English co-operative schemes is no doubt partly due to accident, and partly to shortcomings in the workmen themselves. One of the circumstances which has interfered with co-operation is the extraneous assistance which has been given to the movement; many benevolent and philanthropic men, who have interested themselves in the establishment of co-operative societies, have often not been careful enough to make the workmen feel that they

must rely upon their own efforts for success. Co-operation has been described as such a great improvement on our present industrial system, that enthusiastic friends of the movement have sometimes incautiously declared that people would be neglecting a moral duty if they did not do business with establishments conducted on the co-operative principle. The inculcation of such doctrines necessarily produced a very disastrous influence upon the members of these societies. The feeling was spread that it was a moral duty to deal with them, and that custom was not to be attracted by the excellence and cheapness of the work. The active energy, and desire to work well, which should constitute the very essence of co-operation, were thus effectually discouraged; men will never try to do much for themselves if they have always others to fall back upon for assistance, and if they can always attribute failure to the fault of the public. Many of these remarks are verified by the experience to be gathered from a society known as the Co-operative Tailors. Its formation was in a great measure due to some distinguished philanthropists, known as Christian Socialists, and who were amongst the earliest and most active advocates of co-operation. In their zeal to promote the movement which they had so much at heart, they probably gave too much assistance to the workmen, not only by lending them money, but also by recommending customers; those who dealt with the co-operative tailors were induced to do so not on the ground of the excellent way in which the business was conducted, but rather on the plea that it was the duty of all to help

on so good a cause. This society struggled on through many years; its existence might however be regarded as an artificial one; it never obtained a sound business success, and it was only kept alive through being constantly subsidized by benevolent friends.

Another co-operative trading society was started a few years since, which at the outset seemed to promise much more satisfactory results. After the remarkable progress of the Rochdale Pioneers' store, it might have been reasonably anticipated that there was no place where co-operation, in its highest form of development, was more likely to succeed. All the adherents of the principle consequently watched with interest and hope the attempt which was made at Rochdale in 1855 to establish a co-operative cotton manufactory; in this year a room was rented by a certain number of operatives, and the requisite machinery was erected. Large profits were at once realized. The cotton trade was at this at the height of its prosperity; there was therefore every inducement to extend the business. A part of an old mill was rented. At this time the capital of the concern was £5000; the annual profits realized were 13½ per cent. The following method of distribution was adopted. A dividend of 5 per cent. upon the capital invested was considered as a first charge upon profits; one half the remaining profits was given as an additional dividend to capital; the other half was applied as a bonus to labour, each labourer's share being proportionate to the amount of wages he had earned. The scheme prospered so greatly that at length the operatives resolved

to build a mill of their own. The mill was completed in 1860, at a cost of £45,000; it was filled with the most improved machinery; and the mill was pronounced to be one of the best in the country. Nearly the whole, if not the whole, of the money required for the building and furnishing of this mill was supplied by the operatives; it unfortunately happened, however, that no inconsiderable portion of it was provided by those who did not work in the mill. It will be shown that from this circumstance there gradually arose a conflict of interest, which ultimately caused the failure of the scheme. This new mill had been scarcely set to work when the American civil war commenced, and the cotton trade of this country had to pass through a period of unprecedented adversity. In such a time of severe trial it is not surprising if people succumb to temptation; at any rate the Rochdale co-operators had to pass through this trial, and they were found wanting. One of the first things that happened was a contest between capital and labour; those who owned capital, and did not work in the mill, objected to relinquish, as they thought, a portion of profits which they regarded as their own property. After the point had been repeatedly discussed at various meetings, the interest represented by capital proved itself to be stronger than that of labour; it was consequently determined that henceforth labour should not participate in the profits realized, but that all the profits should be given as a dividend to capital. From that moment it is evident that this trading society was entirely deprived of its co-operative character; it was in fact converted into

an ordinary joint-stock undertaking. There could be no hope that the society, thus transformed, would be able long to survive the severe distress in the cotton trade; it always has been proved difficult for a joint-stock company to compete successfully with the individual trader in any business where constant watchfulness, and attention to small details, are of essential importance. The mill has lately been sold, and the undertaking completely abandoned.

This should not cause us any discouragement with regard to the ultimate success of co-operation, when the circumstances connected with the failure of this particular scheme are considered. In the first place, it was started at a peculiarly unfortunate time; the depression which affected the cotton trade was altogether exceptional in its severity; every trade is subject to fluctuations, and perhaps one of the most important lessons to be learnt by associations of workmen who desire to trade on their own account, will be to set aside a portion of the profits realized when trade is prosperous, to meet the losses of adverse times. The difficulties, however, with which the cotton trade had to contend at this particular period could not have been foreseen even by the most prudent. It may also be doubted whether a judicious choice was made in selecting the cotton manufacture as one of the first branches of industry for the application of the principle of co-operation. The business is one which, perhaps more than any other, has been characterized by great fluctuations. Three or four years of active trade, in which exceptional profits are secured, have usually

been succeeded by a corresponding period of dullness, in which considerable losses have often to be submitted to. It is evident that in a trade which is less speculative and more steady in its returns, co-operation could be tried with much greater chance of success. As already remarked, the temptation to appropriate too large a portion of the profits of prosperous years is probably one of the chief dangers which have to be guarded against in these co-operative experiments. It is obvious that such a temptation will act with much greater force in a trade in which the variations in the returns are unusually great. Probably, however, the most important conclusion to be deduced from the failure of the Rochdale Co-operative Cotton Mill is that English workmen must be brought under the influence of a higher intellectual and moral training, before they can become generally qualified for such advanced forms of industrial development. It is instructive to remark that the very first moment the undertaking met with any difficulty, the old conflict between capital and labour was revived; the co-operative principle was, in fact, abandoned at the very time when it was most essential to cling firmly to it. The increased efficiency which is proved to be given to labour and capital by co-operation, should have rendered it more easy to have contended against the difficulties of adverse times: this advantage, however, was surrendered; and in its place were substituted all the disadvantages which are associated with carrying on such a business as a cotton manufactory on ordinary joint-stock principles. There was also a most serious original defect in the con-

stitution of this co-operative cotton-mill. When describing the French societies it was specially remarked that all the capital required was provided by the labourers themselves. In the Rochdale mill a considerable portion of the capital was subscribed by those who were not operatives in the manufactory: from the outset there was consequently a danger of an antagonism of interest arising, because many, regarding themselves simply as capitalists, were certain to suppose that they were not directly concerned with the prosperity of the labourer. Whenever capital is supplied by those who do not labour the co-operative principle is infringed. As it was at Rochdale, so we think it will be in other cases, that such an infringement will be fatal to the permanent stability of the undertaking.

It would be hazardous to venture a prediction as to the rate at which progress will be made towards the general adoption of co-operation. It seems however certain, that as the workmen gradually attain a higher intellectual and moral standard, they will avail themselves of an industrial system which enables them to secure the maximum advantage from their labour. Considering the number of unfavourable circumstances under which the people have been placed; bearing in mind how baneful has been both the social and economic influence of the Poor Laws; remembering how entirely the mental training of the great body of the people has been neglected, no disappointment or surprise should be felt when it is found that there are few at the present time who are qualified to carry out co-operative schemes. The

members of such societies must repose confidence in each other; they must have the sagacity to select from amongst their number the best man to be manager; when the manager has been appointed they must have the moral courage to submit to his orders; they must have the prudence to forbear spending that which ought to be set aside as a reserve; and, above all, they must have the intelligence to understand that any portion of the profits which is given to labour does not represent so much abstracted from capital, but is a measure of the additional productiveness which is given both to capital and to labour. These probably indicate the most essential qualities to be possessed by workmen who associate together for trading purposes.

After what has been stated it is evident that co-operation could be applied with much greater chance of success to some branches of industry than to others. Those are most fitted for its adoption in which the returns are not subject to severe fluctuations from year to year, and in which the business transacted is not of a speculative character. Thus, if agricultural labourers were generally as intelligent and advanced as Lancashire artisans, a co-operative farm would be much more likely to succeed than a co-operate cotton-mill. The former is a much more steady business than the latter; the operations vary little from year to year; in a cotton manufactory, however, there are constant temptations to engage in speculative purchases of the raw material, and in speculative sales of manufactured goods. Agriculture, as before remarked, is a branch

of industry which particularly suffers by defects in the workmen which may be regarded as due to our present industrial system. The amount of this loss may be regarded as a measure of the gain which would result from the carrying out of schemes of copartnerships and co-operation. Many, however, of the defects belonging to agricultural labour do not materially affect the labour which is employed in a cotton-mill; in the latter case the workmen are gathered together in so small a space that they can be adequately superintended. Their labour is also to a great extent controlled by the machinery, for whilst it continues in movement any shirking on their part can be detected. Then, again, a cotton manufactory cannot be successfully carried on upon a small scale; a very large amount of capital must be expended in buildings, machinery, and in other plant; labourers must necessarily be a long time accumulating this capital, and, until it is accumulated, business cannot be prudently commenced. In many trades, however, the capital required is extremely small; the plant, machinery, &c., being of a simple kind. This is the case where the industrial processes through which any material passes in the course of manufacture depend more upon the skill of the individual workman than upon machinery. If co-operation were applied under these circumstances, many of the formidable difficulties with which the Rochdale mill had to contend would cease to operate.

The opinion here expressed that co-operation could be with most advantage applied to agriculture, may

seem to be indefinitely far from realization. Thus, it may be said not only that the agricultural labourers are less advanced than any other section of the working, classes, but that it is each year becoming more difficult for associations of labourers to become the owners of land. There have, however, been instances even in this country of the successful application of the co-operative principle to agriculture. A considerable area of land which belonged to the late Mr Gurdon of Assington Hall, Suffolk, has been for many years most successfully cultivated by an association of labourers. Mr Gurdon was for a long time much impressed with the miserable condition of the agricultural labourers upon his own and neighbouring estates. He therefore determined about 40 years ago—fourteen years before the commencement of the enterprise of the Rochdale pioneers—to attempt to apply, by way of experiment, the principle of co-operation to a farm. He accordingly let about 60 acres of land, of medium quality, to the labourers who were employed upon it, charging the ordinary rent which would have been paid by a tenant-farmer. He advanced them sufficient capital to cultivate the land. "The Society," says the Rev. Dr Fraser, the present Bishop of Manchester, "has grown and prospered. The occupation has increased from 60 acres to 130; the number of shareholders has been enlarged from 15 to 21. The present value of two shares (for which £3 was the original price) is now £50. All years have not been equally remunerative; but there has not been one since the concern started without some little matter

to divide. The company have repaid the landlord all the borrowed money; and all the stock and implements on the farm are now their own." The labourers, as at Rochdale, select from their own body a committee of management, and those who are employed receive the ordinary agricultural wages. The profits are divided according to a plan very similar to that which has been adopted at Rochdale. Mr Gurdon's first experiment succeeded so well, that in 1854 a second was started, called the Assington Co-operative Agricultural Association. This also has proved eminently successful. The benefit to the labourers produced by these applications of co-operation can hardly be exaggerated. From educational, social, and moral and pecuniary points of view the Assington experiments have indicated the possibility of a new era of industrial progress.

About the same time that Mr Gurdon was establishing his co-operative farm in Suffolk, Mr John Scott Vandeleur was engaged in a somewhat similar experiment at Ralahine in Ireland. The Ralahine experiment, however, partook more of the character of a communistic society than of a true co-operative association. It was distinctly contemplated that the labourers should not only live in common, but that they should also work for a common fund. The stock and implements on the farm were gradually to become the property of the association, which was presided over by Mr Vandeleur himself. The extent of the farm was over 600 acres. During the few years the experiment was in operation there was a most marked improvement both in the social, moral and material condition of the labourers.

There was every promise that the community would have secured permanent prosperity. It unfortunately happened, however, that a few years after the first starting of the association, and long before there had been time for a fair trial of the scheme, Mr Vandeleur was obliged, in consequence of pecuniary difficulties, to sell his estates. This co-operative farm was, like the rest of his property, taken possession of by his creditors. The labourers who were members of the association were considered to have had no legal or equitable claim to compensation for improvements they had effected in the land. The whole association was in this way abruptly broken up.

It would be very unwise to draw any positive conclusions from so short-lived an experiment. The experience obtained, however, not only at Ralahine but also at Assington, clearly proves that when agricultural labourers are sufficiently advanced to form themselves into associations, an agency is brought into operation far more powerful than any other to ameliorate their condition. These particular experiments afford striking evidence of the importance of removing every obstacle which impedes the acquisition of land by such associations. Co-operative agriculture can never be established on a sure and satisfactory basis until the land is owned, and not simply rented, by associations of labourers. The Assington experiment for several years depended not merely for its success, but for its very existence, on Mr Gurdon's life, and also on the continuance of his kindly interest and approval. The Ralahine scheme was prematurely brought to a close

in consequence of the land changing owners. In the next chapter we shall describe the various obstacles which impede the acquisition of land by the people. It will be found that these obstacles may be divided into two classes, one of which depends on natural causes, such as the increase of population and wealth; the other is due to artificial inpediments, such as the law of primogeniture and entail. In a subsequent chapter attention will be directed to the manner in which the poor have been injured by the reckless manner in which common lands have been enclosed. It will also be shewn that some of the remaining waste lands might be utilised by carrying out various experiments in co-operative agriculture.

Before concluding this chapter it may be well to say a few words on the communistic character of the Ralahine scheme. Great as are the advantages which may some day result from communism, it must be admitted that the people are not yet sufficiently advanced for its general adoption. The most serious obstacle to the success of communism arises from the difficulty of imposing any adequate checks upon population. A considerable portion of the poverty now existing has been traced to the absence of prudential habits. If men are imprudent when they are obliged mainly to depend upon their own exertions for maintenance, it is only too certain that this imprudence would be greatly increased if they could support themselves and as many children as they chose to call into existence from a common fund, only in small part provided by their own labour. This danger seems to have been in some

measure recognised by the projectors of the Ralahine scheme. Amongst the rules of the association various regulations were framed with regard to the marriage of the members. Some were expelled from the society for contracting marriages which were not generally approved of. It does not, however, appear whether such disapprobation was based on prudential considerations.

Newly-settled countries, such as Australia, or the Western States of America, offer by far the most favourable fields for the trial of communistic schemes. Where there is a boundless expanse of fertile land, a large increase of population serves to develop the natural resources of the country, and does not bring about the same economic difficulties which a much smaller rate of increase would produce in an old country. The Utah community, which has no doubt obtained considerable economic prosperity, would inevitably have failed in England. It is in every respect highly desirable, even if communism is not attempted, that there should be more co-operation and combination among the first settlers in a new country. If intending emigrants formed themselves into associations they might render each other important assistance, and the disadvantages and hardships of a life spent almost in solitude would be avoided. It is impossible to overstate the benefits which would result if a number of emigrants, instead of locating themselves upon separate holdings, obtained a tract of land and combined themselves into associations similar to those established at Assington and Ralahine.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE ENGLISH SYSTEM OF LAND TENURE.

It may be well to repeat that our agricultural economy, in some of its main characteristics, is peculiar and exceptional. In no other country is there so complete and universal separation between those who own the soil and those who supply the capital and the labour necessary for its cultivation. In England it almost invariably happens that the landowners, the farmers, and the labourers represent three distinct classes, and that the relations between them are analagous to those which exist between the buyer and seller of a commodity. The landlord looks upon the letting of his land chiefly as a pecuniary bargain, and his agent is ordinarily instructed to obtain for it the highest rent the farmer is willing to pay. The farmer, again, tries to secure labour at the cheapest possible rate. From this bargaining there results a conflict of interest which is productive of manifold evil. This aspect of the subject, however, has been sufficiently dwelt upon in

the previous chapter. The object we now have in view is to explain the injury which is inflicted upon agriculture, and the loss which is consequently entailed upon the community, by the separation of the cultivation from the ownership of the soil. It will, however, be useful, in the first instance, to point out that such a system is of modern growth in England, and that in other countries at the present time the cultivator generally possesses some proprietary rights in the land.

In our past history there is probably no class who occupy a more prominent and honourable position than the yeomen, who were farmers cultivating their own freehold land. Distinguished alike for their courage, their independence, and their love of freedom, they were among the first to make the name of England illustrious abroad, and at home they were the stalwart upholders of civil rights and domestic liberty. But the class corresponding to these yeomen has become almost extinct. It will be often found that in a village where there were once twenty or thirty farmers cultivating their own freeholds, the entire land has been absorbed into the estate of one great proprietor. Not only have the farmers descended to the position of rack-rent tenants, but the peasantry have been deprived of valuable rights which gave them a certain proprietary interest in the land, and which made them something more than mere labourers working for hire. Since the beginning of the last century 7,000,000 acres of common land have been enclosed. A very considerable portion of this land was pasture possessed by the poor, upon

which they could graze a cow, and keep pigs and poultry. By far the greater part of the commons thus enclosed have been absorbed into the already overgrown estates of our territorial magnates.

It therefore appears that our present agricultural economy materially differs not only from that which formerly existed in our own country, but also from that which prevails at the present time in other countries. It will, for instance, be rarely found that the three classes concerned in the cultivation of the land are divided into three distinct and opposing interests. In France, Belgium, Flanders, and over a considerable part of the continent, much of the land is occupied by peasant proprietors. These are small farmers, who not only own the land which they cultivate, but who also supply the capital and a large part of the labour necessary for its tillage. Under a system of peasant proprietors, the three classes—landowners, farmers and labourers—are merged into one. In other parts of the continent it is arranged by a custom which has the authority of a law, that the farmer pays for the use of his land a certain fixed portion of the aggregate produce yielded. Such a tenant, unlike the English farmer, is really a joint-owner of the land; for, as long as he pays the rent fixed by custom, he has as perfect security of tenure as if the land were his own. In countries comparatively recently settled, such as the United States and the colonies, land is so abundant that a man will generally purchase his farm; or, if he does not do so, obtains so long a lease as to make it almost equivalent

to a freehold. Various other systems of land tenure might be described; enough has, however, been said to serve as a warning against the misapprehension of supposing that our agricultural economy is the product of laws of nature which are beyond the reach of human control. It has been previously remarked that the leading characteristic of this economy, namely the aggregation of land into large estates, producing a separation between the cultivation and the ownership, is due to two distinct sets of causes. The first of these depends upon the operation of natural agencies, which cannot be directly controlled; the second set of causes is immediately associated with various legal enactments, which can be either repealed or modified.

With a view of shewing this the more clearly, it will be important to consider the chief circumstances which promote the aggregation of land. The subject will be exhibited in its clearest light by describing the process by which small estates are merged into large ones. If by any chance some estate is to be sold which would form a suitable sized farm, it is well known that in all probability it will be purchased by some large neighbouring proprietor, and not by a person intending to cultivate it himself. The reason of this is obvious. A farmer desirous of purchasing the estate, in order to cultivate it, would look upon the affair as an ordinary trade transaction, and would not, consequently, be able to afford a higher price than would yield a proper business profit. The price which he would be willing to give would indicate what may be termed the agri-

cultural value of the land. For reasons which can be readily explained the estate is sure to realize a price far exceeding its mere agricultural value. It can, moreover, be shown that the difference between the selling price of land and its agricultural value always increases in a country such as England, which has obtained a certain density of population, and in which there is a rapid accumulation of wealth.

Experience proves that when men are congregated into large towns there is certain to arise a strong desire to enjoy the pleasures of a country life. In England it is obvious that as towns increase in size and number, and as wealth is so distributed that a greater number become the possessors of large fortunes, it must inevitably happen that the number of those who not only desire, but who have the means to purchase land for its collateral advantages, must steadily increase. The area of this country is comparatively small, and the quantity of land which is at any time offered for sale is extremely limited. Land is, therefore, in the position of a commodity the supply of which cannot be augmented, and the demand for which is constantly increasing. Such a commodity gradually obtains more and more a monopoly value; or, in other words, land is actively competed for as a luxury to be enjoyed by the rich; consequently, the difference between its agricultural value and its selling price becomes greater, and land is taken more and more beyond the reach of those who desire to purchase it with the object of cultivating it for profit.

Suppose there is offered for sale an estate comprising a certain number of farms, and that the annual nett value of these farms is £2500. About £70,000 will represent the agricultural value of such an estate, for at this price it would not return a larger interest than can be obtained for money invested in the funds. It is, however, probable that the estate would realize £100,000. The man who paid such a price for it would have to sacrifice at least £1000 a year, for he would only obtain 2½ per cent. interest upon his outlay; but to some wealthy trader or lucky speculator the sacrifice of £1000 a year would simply represent an amount well worth while to give for the advantages associated with the ownership of an estate. Its possessor could enjoy all the pleasures of a country life; and, moreover, the ownership of land confers many social privileges. In an aristocratic country such as England, the great majority of those who are successful in trade care more for what they call social position than for anything else. The manufacturer, the contractor, the stock-exchange speculator, see in the possession of land a long vista of social distinction. Through it they look forward to be made county magistrates, deputy-lieutenants, or high sheriffs; they have the satisfaction of knowing that their children, perhaps after an aristocratic marriage, will be able to efface the recollection of the origin of their fortunes, and to ignore all connection of the family with trade. Nothing is a more striking characteristic in the condition of England than the increase in the number of the very wealthy class during

the last quarter of a century. Fifty years since the accumulation of a fortune of £100,000 was of somewhat rare occurrence. Now at least ten persons realize £100,000 where before only one was able to do so. The rich, as often remarked, grow richer; whilst the poverty of the very poor, if it is not more intense, certainly does not perceptibly diminish. Many circumstances have combined to make the realization of large fortunes much more frequent than formerly. India, the colonies, and the general development of our foreign trade, have afforded a favourable field for commercial success. The rapid extension of the railway system caused enormous transfer of wealth, and enabled many contractors, engineers and others to make princely fortunes. Then, again, it must be borne in mind that English trade has for some years past been characterised, not only by a most active, but often by a most reckless spirit of speculation. People have made haste to grow rich; many of course have failed in the attempt; some, however, have succeeded; and it is these who, having suddenly become rich, are the most desirous for advancement in the social scale. They consequently eagerly compete for the possession of land.

Enough has now been said to indicate the agencies which in such a country as England are constantly tending to increase the divergence between the selling price of land and its agricultural value. In considering these agencies it is obvious that they can be at once classified into the two groups to which allusion has already been made. In the first place, it must be at once observed

that many of the circumstances which influence the price of land without affecting its agricultural value, depend upon the spontaneous operation of natural causes, which either cannot or ought not to be controlled; whereas other circumstances exerting a precisely similar effect are either directly or indirectly due to the maintenance of various laws or institutions which can be modified by the legislature.

As an example of an agency belonging to the first of these two classes, it would be futile to attempt to prevent the increased demand for land, and the consequent rise in its price produced in a country, which, with a limited area, increases in population and in wealth. Although it would be idle to try to counteract the growth of such a demand, yet the consequences resulting from it are most materially affected by various circumstances which are not necessary, but on the contrary are artificial adjuncts to the possession of land. In order to prove this, it can without difficulty be shewn that the quantity of land brought into the market is artificially limited, and it is thus made to assume more the character of a monopoly, not only by various customs and laws, such as those of primogeniture and entail, but also by the maintenance of many other political and social institutions which will be hereafter noticed.

With regard to primogeniture it will very probably be said that in England there is no law of primogeniture, it is simply a custom voluntarily maintained. In one sense this is doubtless true. No man who is the absolute owner of land is compelled to leave it to his eldest son

by any legal enactment. Although there is no law in our statute-book which enforces primogeniture, yet the institution receives a most powerful encouragement and a most effective sanction from what is known as the Law of Intestacy. If a man dies without a will, all his personal property—that is, all his property except land and houses—is divided according to strict principles of equity amongst those most nearly dependent on him; his widow takes one-third, and the remaining two-thirds are divided in equal shares among his children. If, however, the owner of landed property dies without a will, every rood of his land becomes the property of his eldest son, even although the widow and the younger children may be left penniless. Those who defend the continuance of such a distinction between real and personal property, urge as an argument that little effect would be produced by making the law of intestacy the same with regard to both kinds of property. It is argued that those who die intestate refuse to make a will because their property will be distributed exactly in the manner most consonant to their wishes. The owner of an estate who makes no will because he not only is satisfied, but is desirous that his son should inherit all the land, could, if the law of intestacy were altered, at once defeat the objects which the supporters of the change had in view; for, by making a will, he could distribute his property exactly as it would have been distributed before the law was altered. Although such reasoning is plausible, yet it entirely loses sight of a most important aspect of the question; for it ignores the encouragement and sanction given to primo-

geniture by the present law of intestacy. If a man dies without a will, the State is supposed to distribute his property in a manner most in accordance with natural justice, and most conducive to the well-being of society. This being so, the existing law of intestacy declares to the whole nation that the State, representing the collective wisdom of the community, considers it just and politic that with regard to personal property no distinction should be made between children; but in the case of land the whole of it ought to become the property of the eldest son, although his sisters and younger brothers are left absolutely unprovided for. It is impossible to conceive the State enforcing a more immoral or more mischievous doctrine. It fosters what may be regarded as peculiarly a besetting sin of the English; for it encourages the contemptible pride which is exhibited in the desire to found a family. We all eagerly seize at any justification for wrong doing; and the man who, in order to create an eldest son, impoverishes his younger children, can find some consolation when his conscience upbraids him, from the fact that he is leaving his property exactly in the same way as the State declares it ought to be distributed in accordance with principles of natural justice.

It is probable that no very striking effects would immediately result from altering the law of intestacy; it is, however, almost certain that the prevalence of the custom of primogeniture is in a great measure due to the maintenance of this law. If the custom lost the sanction which the law gives it, it would soon come to

pass that a man who enriched one child at the expense of all the rest would be considered to have committed an act of the grossest injustice.

The practice of settling or entailing estates probably has its origin in the same motives as those which form the basis of the institution of primogeniture. If the custom of creating an eldest son, owing to the condemnation of public opinion, became much less general, there would not be such a strong desire as there is now to prevent land being sold by settling or entailing it. At the present time the law permits land to be settled, or, as it is often termed, entailed upon any number of lives in being and twenty-one years after. Almost all the large estates of the landed aristocracy are so entailed that those who are in actual possession of them are only life-owners; the freehold is not their property, and consequently it cannot be sold. In this way it happens that at any particular time by far the greater part of the land of this country may be regarded as a commodity which cannot be sold. The artificial limitation thus imposed upon the amount of land which can be brought into the market, confers upon land more the character of a monopoly than it would otherwise possess. The unnatural stimulus in this way given to its price is one of the causes which create so great a difference between the agricultural and the selling value of land.

It is easy to explain the method by which estates are entailed by successive resettlements. *A*, the life-owner of an estate, has an eldest son, *B*, who has just come of age. Upon *A*'s death, *B* would become absolute owner

of the estate, and would then, if he liked, be able to sell it. But the desire to preserve land in the same family is so strong that all chance of the estate being sold is usually prevented by the following very simple expedient. The eldest son, *B*, when he comes of age, will need an allowance from his father. As a condition of granting this allowance, *B* is required to consent to have the estate settled upon his eldest son; this is probably a child who is yet unborn; but, until this child comes of age, it is impossible for the estate to be sold after the new settlement has once been made. If *B* should not marry, or should have no children, still during his lifetime the estate cannot be sold, for the law always recognizes the possibility of his having an eldest son. It is often said, in defence of the prevailing system, that in deeds of settlement or entail a power of sale is usually inserted. But this makes little or no difference to the effect which such settlements produce in limiting the quantity of land which can be brought into the market. If this power of sale is exercised, the money which is obtained for the land thus disposed of must be again invested in the purchase of land. Therefore, to whatever extent this power of sale is brought into operation the quantity of land which remains settled, or, in other words, which cannot be sold, is unchanged. There is generally a considerable expense involved in such sales and repurchases; and consequently the power of sale is seldom used except in disposing of outlying portions of an estate, with the object of securing land more conveniently situated.

Enough has now probably been said to explain the influence exerted by primogeniture and entail, not only in creating large estates, but also in imposing a prohibition upon the sale of a considerable portion of the whole land of the country. This aggregation of land and limitation of the quantity which can be sold, must be regarded as productive of great mischief. In order to ensure efficient cultivation it is essential that the cultivator should possess some proprietary rights in the soil; if he does not do so, agriculture will in all probability suffer, because he will not have an adequate inducement to employ a proper amount of capital in his business. The English system of land-tenure directly tends to divorce capital from the soil; and this evil, instead of being cured, is each year assuming increased proportions; since, for reasons previously pointed out, the area of land cultivated by those who own it is gradually becoming smaller. When a man cultivates his own freehold he has every inducement to do all in his power to add to its productiveness by the application of capital and skill. All the additional produce which the land can be made to yield will reward him for his increased outlay and for his greater exertions. But the farmer who is a tenant at will, has no security whatever, that, if by his capital and skill the land is made more productive, the whole advantage will not at the end of the year be appropriated by the landowner, who, by raising the rent, absorbs for himself the whole additional value which has been given to the land. It is impossible to suggest any arrangement which, by discouraging industrial energy,

can be more antagonistic to good husbandry. Some idea may be formed of the injury thus inflicted on the community, when it is remembered that a great part of the cultivated land of the country is occupied by tenants at will.

A partial remedy is provided for the evil just pointed out by the granting of leases of considerable duration. A lease, however, though it be for fourteen years, or even for a longer period, is only a very incomplete remedy. It does not remove, but simply palliates the mischievous consequences of separating the cultivation of the soil from its ownership. A farmer who, for instance, has a lease for fourteen years is constantly haunted with the fear that if he does very much to improve his farm, his landlord will, at the expiration of the lease, make a very serious advance in his rent. He is therefore discouraged from doing all for the farm which he would otherwise do, because he has no security that his rent will not be raised in proportion to the value of the improvements he has effected by his own money. A tax is thus virtually imposed on good husbandry, and the tax is so adjusted that the greatest amount is levied from those who expend the most energy, skill and capital upon their farms. The possession of a long lease offers to a farmer considerable inducements to employ capital on the land during the first years of his lease. But it must not be forgotten that as the lease draws towards its close, the farmer, unless he can depend on its renewal, not only does not expend capital on the land, but has a temptation to exhaust it, and take everything out of it that he

can. This danger is attempted to be guarded against by inserting in the lease various covenants as to the method of cultivation that shall be pursued. Thus either the four course or the five course system may be stipulated for; or sometimes it is arranged that only a certain portion of the farm shall be under corn crops. These covenants are notoriously so habitually evaded that they produce little effect, except that in many cases they prevent the farmer adopting that system of cultivation which would be most productive, and therefore most advantageous to the whole community.

It may probably be said that few landlords would be so unjust or so illiberal as to raise their rents when their land is improved, and thus deprive the tenant of the fruits of his own labour and capital. In the absence of sufficient data it would be useless to attempt an estimate of the number of landowners who are just and liberal, compared with those whose character is the exact reverse. The Irish Land Bill recently passed affords conclusive evidence that landowners, as a class, cannot be trusted to give to a tenant what is his due, by forbearing to take from him in the form of increased rent the additional productiveness conferred upon the land through his energy and capital. By this Bill the tenant can claim compensation for unexhausted improvements. Some landlords have, no doubt, always given this compensation voluntarily; but as such conduct was exceptional it was necessary to give the tenants some legal security that they would be treated with justice, and the Irish Land Bill was the result.

Hitherto in England there has been no general demand for tenant-right; it must not, however, for this reason be supposed that the English farmer incurs no risk in expending capital upon the land because he is certain to receive equitable treatment from his landlord. In some cases the tenant is sure to meet with such equitable treatment; it, however, too frequently happens that a large proprietor relinquishes the entire management and control of his estates to some agent, who does not hesitate to obtain the highest rent possible for a farm, independently of all considerations as to how much of its present productiveness is due to the tenant. Such conduct on the part of the agent is not unfrequently stimulated by his receiving as a salary a certain commission on the aggregate rental of the estate. The tenant, moreover, has an insecure tenure, and expends his capital without an adequate certainty that he will be able to enjoy the profits realized by it, even when he is fortunate enough to have the best of landlords. Not many years since the owner of one of the largest and best cultivated estates in the country died; during his lifetime every tenant could feel the most absolute confidence in his strict justice; they were, consequently, so much encouraged to expend their capital that the estate became nearly as well farmed as if each tenant had been improving his own, and not another man's land. Those who rented under this landlord were always regarded by their neighbours as peculiarly fortunate. Suddenly everything was changed; the owner of the estate died in the prime of life; his eldest son, who

inherited the property, was a child of seven or eight years of age; the estates were vested in trustees, and with the sanction of the Court of Chancery an agent was appointed to manage them. This agent seemed to think that he had no other duty to perform except to hand over to the trustees the largest possible income out of the estates; old tenants and new tenants were all alike to him; it was a matter of perfect indifference whether a farmer, having taken the land in a wretched state of cultivation, had increased its productiveness two-fold by his capital and skill. Whenever a lease expired all such considerations as these were ignored; a calculation was made of the very utmost rack-rent which each farm would bear, and if the then occupier were unwilling to pay this rent he was unceremoniously turned adrift and was told to make way for some one else. Throughout the locality a deep impression has of course been created by these occurrences. A great discouragement has been given to enterprising and skilful agriculture, for it is felt that the tenant has no valid security even when he is so fortunate as to have a landlord who is certain to be just and liberal.

Another most serious discouragement to good agriculture arises from the over preservation of game, which during the last few years has been carried on to an increasing extent by many large proprietors. An amusement known as *battue* shooting has, under the patronage of a few so-called distinguished personages, become prevalent. The success of the *battue* depends upon there being such an enormous quantity of game that in three

or four days many thousand head can be slaughtered. It would be foreign to our purpose to make any comments upon the influence of such a pastime upon those who pursue it. It is, however, obvious that such a stock of game as a successful *battue* requires must, to a very considerable extent, destroy the surrounding crops. It is often said that although the crops may thus be partly destroyed, yet the farmer has no grievance, for if he suffers loss he has only himself to blame. When he agrees to rent his farm he can take into account the quantity of game upon it, and can adjust the rent he is willing to pay accordingly. Even if the soundness of such reasoning be admitted, it evidently loses sight of the loss inflicted on the whole community by a diminution in the productiveness of land. No account is also taken of the bad social influence which is usually exercised by the over preservation of game. Wherever it exists there is sure to be a considerable amount of poaching. In many counties the greater part of the criminal offences are committed against the game laws. Not only has the poacher while he is in prison to be maintained out of the county rates, but his wife and family will usually during his imprisonment have to come upon the parish. Poaching thus causes a very considerable addition to local burdens which press so heavily on industry.

Reverting, however, to the influence exercised upon agriculture by the undue preservation of game, it is easy to shew that the farmer cannot protect himself against the loss which may be thus inflicted upon him. It has

not unfrequently happened that the stock of game on a farm has been greatly increased a few years after a long lease has been taken. In such a case the farmer has no remedy, and the injury done to his crops may be so serious as not only to absorb all his profits but even to cause him a large annual deficit. As an example, it has been stated that since the Prince of Wales, one of the chief patrons of *battue* shooting, purchased a property in Norfolk, the preservation of game was suddenly greatly increased in that county. Some of the resident gentry vied with each other in providing an abundance of this noble sport for the Prince. The result has been that many Norfolk farmers, who, when they entered upon their leases had only a very moderate stock of game on their farms, have suddenly found their crops half eaten up by ground game. They cannot escape the loss thus inflicted upon them: it is, in fact, as real as if a fine of many hundreds a year had been imposed upon them. The mischief produced cannot be estimated by the injury done to particular farmers. A feeling of insecurity is spread, which exerts a great influence in discouraging the application of capital to the land. For it is not unreasonably felt that there is little use in farming well if the crops are to be overrun by thousands of hares and rabbits.

Many of the obstacles to efficient husbandry just enumerated would be removed by a Land Bill similar in its provisions to the Irish measure, and by a thorough reform of the Game Laws. English farmers would invest far more capital in the land, and would conduct

their business with far greater enterprise, if they possessed greater security of tenure, if they were guaranteed a just compensation for improvements, and if they were adequately protected against the over preservation of game. At the present time there seems to be little chance that such a measure will even be demanded, much less passed. The farmers of England have always been possessed with a strange infatuation, for they have considered that their interests were best represented by their landlords. The farmers have generally the power to return the members for every county constituency, and yet, in almost every single instance, they select as their representatives either some large proprietor, or some one whose whole interest is bound up with the landowning class. As long as such a state of things continues, it might as well be expected that grapes will grow on thorns and figs on thistles, as that tenant-right for England will be granted by a Parliament in which the farmers by a strange perversity choose to be misrepresented, and the labourers who till the land have no representation at all.

The mischief produced by primogeniture and entail may be viewed in yet another aspect. It has been already remarked that the great majority of landowners have simply a life interest in their estates. With a view of maintaining the institution of primogeniture, the estate is generally settled upon the eldest son. This is almost invariably the case with the large properties, which each year embrace a greater part of the whole area of the country. It is obvious that a man who

has only a life interest in an estate has much less inducement to expend capital upon its improvement than if it were his own freehold. It must also be evident that primogeniture generally creates a most marked disparity in wealth between the eldest son and the other children. It very frequently happens that a man inherits an entailed estate worth many thousands a year, whilst his brothers and sisters have scarcely a competency. Not many years since, upon the death of a well-known nobleman, the eldest son came into the possession of estates worth not less than £60,000 or £70,000 a year; his father dying young, and having held the property only for a few years, had been unable to make any adequate provision for the other children; they consequently have not an income of more than £200 a year each. A landowner in the position just described must often feel it to be his duty not to spend money in the improvement of his estate. He of course is well aware, that whether the estate is improved or not, the eldest son will be extremely rich, and his younger children so comparatively poor, that he will be scarcely justified in taking away a single pound from the latter, although it could be so productively invested as to yield for the eldest son a return exceeding a hundredfold the original outlay. It is, after all, a matter of little importance whether a man is worth £60,000 or £70,000 a year; but to one who has been accustomed to live in ease and affluence, even a small addition to an income of £200 a year signifies that many extra comforts may

be obtained, which in the case of such a person may be regarded as almost necessaries of life.

It therefore appears that our existing system of land tenure discourages the application of capital to the improvement of the land in two distinct ways; the farmer is discouraged from investing capital, because he has no security that his rent will not be so much raised as to take from him all advantage resulting from the improvement of his farm; secondly, the landowner, who, from the estate being entailed has only a life interest in it, is usually not justified in incurring any outlay, however productive it might be, because the money spent in improving would enrich the already wealthy elder son at the expense of the other children.

Nothing, of course, can be more opposed to the promotion of good agriculture than circumstances which discourage the investment of capital in improving the land. The welfare of the whole community demands that the causes of such discouragement should be removed. If the land is prevented being as productive as it would otherwise be, wrong is done to the entire nation; food is rendered unnecessarily dear, and every man has either to work a greater number of hours to obtain a maintenance, or has to content himself with a sparser supply of the necessaries and comforts of life. Hence the question of primogeniture and entail does not simply concern those who are engaged in agriculture; the well-being of the nation demands that everything should be done to curtail the operation of practices which, founded upon the barbarous and unjust idea of

preferring one child to all the rest, directly tend to diminish the productiveness of the land. ' In suggesting some of the remedies to be applied in order to counteract the state of things just described, it is obvious, as previously indicated, that, in the case of intestacy, no distinction should be made between real and personal property. The power of entailing or settling land should be restricted; everything should also be done to prevent the possession of land conferring social and political privileges which are not associated with other kinds of property. Lord-lieutenants, deputy-lieutenants, high sheriffs, and county magistrates ought not in future to be chosen almost entirely from the land-owning class, but should be selected from the most worthy and best qualified men in the county, whatever may be their social position. The political and social importance now attached to the possession of land would be considerably diminished if the present constitution of the House of Lords were fundamentally changed. Not only is the principle of hereditary legislation entirely antagonistic to political justice, but the hereditary character of the House of Lords acts as a powerful inducement to maintain the institution of primogeniture. The absolute predominance of the landed interest in that assembly gives to land political power and social importance. It is, therefore, even for economic considerations, of the utmost consequence that the hereditary character of the House of Lords should be changed.

Much would be done to discourage the desire to

form large landed estates, if the hereditary principle were altogether supplanted, not only in the constitution of the House of Lords, but also in the conferring of titles. Hereditary titles exert a very considerable influence in fostering the aggregation of land. If one child of a family inherits a certain dignity, he is frequently singled out from the rest of the children for special favour; a great effort is made to maintain the title with a suitable amount of property, and in this way primogeniture is directly promoted. Then, again, the feeling is spread that to obtain some title is the chief reward of commercial success; and experience shows that if a wealthy merchant or manufacturer secures a baronetcy or a peerage, his first thought often is to purchase a large estate, so that his successors in the title may be enrolled in the ranks of a landed aristocracy.

It is often assumed that the advocates of the changes here indicated desire to introduce the French system of the compulsory subdivision of land. There is, however, obviously a fundamental distinction between the removal of all the artificial causes which encourage the aggregation of land, and the introduction of the French law, which compels the equal division of land amongst the children of a family. It is not necessary here to enter upon a discussion of the much debated question as to the advantages of small properties. The subject is fully considered in every standard treatise on Political Economy. Perhaps, however, it will be well to state that great confusion often arises from the assumption,

that the relative advantages and disadvantages can be determined by ascertaining whether farming on a large or a small scale is the more productive. Peasant properties may be justly considered to confer the most signal benefits on a country, even although it be proved that in a country such as England farming is more productive on a large than on a small scale. The comparison which ought to be made, is one between a system in which the land is rented, and one in which the land is not only owned by the cultivator, but the necessary labour is usually supplied by him and his family. In the latter case there is none of that antagonism of interest which is so blighting to English industry; the three classes, landlords, farmers, and labourers—between whom there is often such a costly and wasteful struggle—are merged into one individual. By such an arrangement industry and thrift are most powerfully stimulated; for a man who cultivates his own freehold knows that if he renders his land more productive the advantage cannot be appropriated by another in the form of increased rent. All observers testify to the extraordinary industry and thrift of peasant proprietors. It may, however, be objected that the extended use of machinery in agriculture places the small farmer each year in a more unfavourable position; steam is being gradually applied to almost all agricultural operations: the steam-plough, and steam-cultivator, cannot work satisfactorily unless the fields are of considerable area, and the small farmer will rarely have sufficient means to purchase such costly implements. But even if it be

admitted that farming on a large scale is, for the reason just explained, becoming more advantageous, yet this does not in the slightest degree detract from the importance of removing the antagonism of interests now existing between the three classes engaged in agriculture. This might be effected, as previously indicated, by the formation of associations of labourers, who would not only own the land they cultivated, but would also supply the necessary capital. In this way the difficulty about small farms might be completely got over; for such an association might, by increasing its numbers and its capital, cultivate a farm of exactly such area as is proved by experience to yield the highest rate of profit. The carrying out of such a principle of association is evidently greatly impeded by any circumstances which confer upon land a value independently of that which arises from its productiveness. When therefore the subject is considered from this point of view, an adequate idea may be formed of the economic importance of those changes in our system of land tenure which have been here suggested.

The existing system is, however, most conclusively condemned when we estimate its results by considering the condition of our agricultural labourers. It is vain to attempt to justify the present state of things by saying that the land was never better cultivated, that the competition for farms was never more active, and that rents are rapidly rising. Let all this be admitted, but the more productive our land is proved to be, the more severe ought to be the censure of social and economic

arrangements which condemn a great majority of those whose labour tills the soil to exist upon a miserable pittance of 10*s.* or 11*s.* a week.

The following descriptions of the present condition of the agricultural population are taken from the Report of the Commission which recently enquired into the subject. The Rev. J. Fraser, the present Bishop of Manchester, in speaking of the condition of the cottages in the counties he visited, says: "Nothing can be stronger than the language used about the general condition of the cottages of the peasantry, certainly in every one of the agricultural districts, almost in every one of the parishes which I have visited. In one return they are described as 'miserable;' in a second as 'deplorable;' in a third as 'detestable;' in a fourth as a 'disgrace to a Christian community'"..."The majority of the cottages that exist in rural parishes are deficient in almost every requisite that should constitute a home for a Christian family in a civilized community"..."It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of such a state of things in every aspect—physical, social, economical, moral, intellectual." Mr H. Tremenheere says that "Cottage improvement was often impressed upon me by the clergy as the question of the day; for 'how,' they justly reasoned, 'can we influence a class by schools when the houses they live in are overcrowded, dirty, and often without the requisites of decency and comfort.'" The following conclusions are drawn by Mr T. E. Kebbel from the Report of the Commissioners, as to the ordinary diet of the agricultural labourer. "In Dorsetshire, vegetables flavoured with

bacon-fat, or bread and cheese; in Somersetshire bread and butter, or bread dipped in cider; in Cheshire, potatoes, or gruel thickened with treacle, were found to be the commonest articles of food. In Staffordshire, Mr Stanhope found a village where even bacon was unknown."

Bad as the state of things here disclosed is, it becomes far more serious when it is proved that these evils are not an inheritance which we have received from the past, and which advancing wealth and civilization will get rid of. Some of the highest authorities who have investigated the subject consider that in spite of our vaunted progress, in spite of the great accumulation of wealth, our rural population were both materially and socially better off, a century and a half since, than they are at the present time.

We again quote from Mr Kebbel's work on the agricultural labourer. On p. 60 he says, "One of the most interesting passages in the Report of the Commissioners, appointed to enquire into the employment of women and children in Agriculture, is the one that gives a short history of the connection between the peasantry and the land from the earliest times down to the present date, from which the conclusion is irresistible that there have been periods in England when the labouring man was a great deal better off than he is now. Without taking our readers all the way back to the 14th century, it may be sufficient to state, that, in Acts of Parliament passed in the reigns of Edward VI. and Elizabeth, the right of the peasantry to have a certain quantity of land attached to their cottages is clearly recognized. Nor was this the

only right in connection with the land which they derived from the feudal system. They were privileged to pasture their cattle and to cut their firewood on the lord's wastes; and it is obvious that the condition of comfort to which they were raised by these combined advantages is only fairly described as one of 'rude abundance'.....At the beginning of the 17th century the peasant was as well off as he had been in the 14th. He languished again during the civil war and under the Protectorate, but experienced a second *renaissance* after the Revolution; and for the first three-quarters of the 18th century he enjoyed a kind of golden age. At the end of that time two events occurred almost simultaneously, which had a marked effect on the condition of the English peasantry —the Enclosure Acts, which were passed between 1760 and 1774; and the American war, which broke out the year afterwards. The first curtailed his means; the second, by raising prices, increased his expenditure."

Mr Kebbel in this description omits one circumstance which, at about the same period, produced a great effect in depressing the condition of the rural labourer. In a previous chapter it was shewn that, at the time to which he refers, all the salutary restrictions imposed by the Elizabethan Poor Law began to be relaxed. Improvidence was thus encouraged just at the very time when, to use Mr Kebbel's words, the means of the labourer were curtailed and his expenditure increased. The benefit which the labourer might have derived from more capital being invested in agriculture, was thus neutralized by the operation of these three agencies. It

is, in fact, hopeless to expect any permanent improvement in the condition of a class, while their social and moral condition is such that a temporary advance in wages immediately stimulates an increase of population. An influence is brought into operation antagonistic to the welfare of the labourer; because, if population is stimulated, the additional food required has to be obtained at a greater proportionate cost, and the necessaries of life become dearer. In all branches of industry there has probably been an advance in money-wages. This advance has been much less in agriculture than in other employments; because, as previously remarked, the rural labourer has been in such a backward state both socially and materially, that any advance in wages, instead of effecting a permanent improvement, has more frequently stimulated an increase of population. But even where it can be shown that wages have advanced, it must be remembered that such an advance does not prove that the labourer is better off than he was before. If there is a rise of 30 per cent. in the price of all the commodities of ordinary comsumption, a man is poorer instead of richer, although his wages may be raised from 8*s.* to 10*s.* a week.

It is too frequently forgotten that, especially in the case of rural labourers, the cost of living at different periods cannot be ascertained by simply comparing ordinary lists of prices. These lists are usually compiled from the prices current in such a metropolis as London. It is well known, however, that formerly many commodities were far cheaper in remote country districts than

in London. This was particularly so with all perishable commodities which were expensive to transport—such as milk, eggs, butter, fresh meat, and fish. The introduction of railways and a general improvement in the means of communication have exerted a powerful influence in equalizing prices throughout the country. As an example, it may be mentioned that in many districts where milk could formerly be obtained almost for nothing, it has now become so scarce that the poor have to pay for it as high a price as is charged in London, and then can only obtain it as a favour. Farmers find it far more profitable, and much less troublesome, to sell their milk wholesale to some London dealer rather than retail it in their own locality. It is difficult to over-estimate the loss and suffering which are thus often inflicted on the rural poor. A plentiful supply of milk is by far the cheapest and most wholesome diet for children. Nothing, in fact, provides a substitute for it; and clergymen, doctors and others who are most intimately acquainted with the poor, assert that the difficulty of obtaining milk in many country districts is now producing a most serious effect upon the health and stamina of the population. Again, it is to be remarked that now the agricultural labourer has seldom anything to depend upon except his wages. Before the commons were so generally enclosed, he was able to keep a cow, a pig, and some poultry; and thus enjoyed many luxuries and comforts which are now quite beyond his reach. We shall in our concluding chapter describe the injury which has been done to the poor by the reckless and unjust enclosure of commons.

It may be considered as a conclusive proof of the present unsatisfactory state of our rural labourers, that they are in the great majority of instances living on the verge of pauperism. In many of the best cultivated districts of England it would be difficult to find a single labourer who had saved enough to live for one week without parochial relief, if from illness or any other cause he was unable to work. It is a mockery to be continually talking about prosperity when the people employed in the most important of all industries have no other prospect before them than to end their days either in miserable pauperism or in degrading dependence. As often repeated, no statistics of growing trade and of accumulating wealth can explain away such a terrible fact; the richer we are as a nation, the more discreditable and ominous it becomes. No one who cares for the welfare of his fellow-man, or for the future of his country, should rest satisfied with economic arrangements which in numberless cases cause a life of steady industry to yield no other result than an old age dragged out in penury and want.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENCLOSURE OF COMMONS.

It frequently happens that the present and future condition of a country is powerfully affected by causes which work so steadily and so noiselessly that they almost escape notice. For more than a hundred years vast quantities of land, over which the public possessed invaluable rights, have gradually been absorbed by individual proprietors, and have in many cases extended the boundaries of estates already too large. Up to the year 1845 commons were enclosed by private bills. All public discussion was thus avoided, and it is now impossible to form an adequate conception of the extent to which individuals were enriched at the expense of the public and the poor. By means of these private bills more than seven million acres of land were enclosed between the beginning of the eighteenth century and 1845. The late Duke of Newcastle (then Earl of Lincoln) once said in the House of Commons: "This I know, that in nineteen cases out of twenty, committees

of this House, sitting on private enclosure bills, neglected the rights of the poor." But such expressions of opinion seem to have produced little impression. In 1845 the system of enclosing by private bills ceased, and every enclosure bill has, since that time, been passed by both Houses of Parliament in the same way as any other legislative measure. Each session it is usual for the Enclosure Commissioners to embody various enclosures in two bills, for the passing of which the Home Secretary is responsible.

The apathy of the public on the subject is so great that for many years it was a custom that these annual enclosure bills should be regarded as mere formal measures, upon which it would be thought strange to raise a discussion or to make a comment. These bills have been forced through all their stages at two or three o'clock in the morning, when the House is almost empty, when the reporters have departed, and when the Government of the day is master of the situation; the few independent members remaining being completely outnumbered by junior Lords of the Treasury, by Gentlemen of the Household, and others who are never absent when their votes are required by the party whip.

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 distinctly contemplated that a certain amount should be reserved from land, proposed to be enclosed, as allotment gardens for the labouring poor, and as a recreation ground for the public. As an illustration of the reckless way in which enclosures have been permitted, it may be mentioned that in the session of 1869, a bill

was introduced which proposed to enclose 6900 acres in different parts of the country, and out of this the Enclosure Commissioners reserved three acres as recreation grounds for the public, and six acres as allotment-gardens for the labouring poor. When the measure was on the eve of passing, and had reached its third reading, the Government reluctantly consented to allow the bill to be referred to a select committee. The evidence given before this committee proved that unless the attention of the public is aroused, the greed for land, unchecked by Government and by Parliament, will quickly absorb all the remaining commons; out of this wreck of public property the most insignificant amount possible will be reserved for the people.

Before proceeding to inquire into the general policy of enclosures it will be well to mention a few facts to illustrate the manner in which the interests of those who are not landowners are regarded by the Enclosure Commissioners. Wisley was one of the commons contained in the Enclosure Bill of 1869, and because it was in the neighbourhood of the metropolis it was referred to a separate committee. Wisley Common contains 375 acres, and possesses great natural beauty. One of the witnesses said that he could not have believed there was such beautiful wild scenery within nineteen miles of London. The common is much frequented for riding, driving, and walking by people in the neighbourhood, and also by visitors from the metropolis. So many rare plants and insects are found upon it that it has been described as one of the best places

in England for the study of botany and entomology. If the common had been enclosed the whole of it would have been divided amongst three large landed proprietors who reside in the neighbourhood; two acres only being reserved by the commissioners as a recreation ground for the public. The late Duke of Newcastle's bitter strictures upon the past policy of enclosures only too accurately describe what was to be done at Wisley. So far as the labouring poor were concerned, their interests were altogether ignored, for not a single acre of land was set aside to provide them with allotment-gardens. The select committee, after hearing evidence from the neighbourhood, unanimously agreed that if this common were enclosed at least ten acres should be reserved as allotments for the labouring poor. This one recommendation is a suggestive comment upon the manner in which the Enclosure Commissioners discharge their duty; for it shews that the committee deemed it expedient that from this one common, comprising only 375 acres, an amount should be reserved for the poor exceeding by more than 60 per cent. the whole quantity reserved by the commissioners from 6900 acres. This remark will perhaps be even more strikingly exemplified by considering what happened with regard to another of the enclosures contained in the bill of 1869. Withypool Common, situated in North Devon, comprises 1904 acres, and the amount to be reserved out of this large area as a recreation ground for the public was one acre. The committee were naturally surprised at the singular parsimony of this reservation.

It was, moreover, difficult to suggest the use to which a recreation ground of one acre could be turned. It would be almost too small a place for schoolboys to play a game of ball upon. The committee thought it was only fair in the first instance to ask for an explanation from the assistant commisioner who had arranged the enclosure. He justified the appropriation of only one acre upon three distinct grounds, which shall be given in his own words:

1. Because a larger amount would not be used.

2. Because the population never resort to the common for exercise and recreation.

3. Because there are other commons where the children and grown-up people can rove about, and because the ground is steep.

With the view of throwing further light upon the subject, it was thought desirable to obtain information from some resident. The parish clerk of Withypool and the village schoolmaster were accordingly summoned; and they, following the example of the assistant commissioner, also summarised their opinions about the recreation ground into three distinct allegations:

1. The common is a general resort of the inhabitants for exercises, for games, and for the meetings of their friendly societies.

2. There is no other common within five or six miles to which the public are allowed free access.

3. One acre is not sufficient either for the children or adults, and there are seven acres equally suitable adjoining.

Does not this one case shew that an attempt to force an enclosure bill through Parliament without examination or discussion should be pertinaciously resisted? It is most important constantly to remember that the injury inflicted upon the public by enclosures is absolutely irreparable. If an unjust tax is imposed one year it can be remitted the next; if an unwise law is passed it can be hereafter repealed; but when a common is once enclosed, the public can never regain the rights they once possessed over it. Any one who has had even a short experience of political life can usually draw some consolation from a defeat. Often it can with certainty be foreseen that an adverse vote upon a particular question will only pave the way for a more complete and satisfactory settlement. But when, as at the end of the session of 1869, a proposal was carried by a single vote to enclose a particular hill from which one of the finest views in England could be seen, and over which the public had wandered from time immemorial, it was felt that, associated with such a defeat, there were no counterbalancing advantages. Confidence in party government was rudely shaken when it was observed that more than half the majority who carried this enclosure by a single vote were officials; some of whom in unofficial speeches had eloquently described the evil brought on the country when the people are divorced from the soil by the aggregation of the land into large estates. When it is said that such cases as Wisley and Withypool shew that the interests of the public and the poor are not adequately protected,

it is customary to reply, that when an enclosure takes place an inquiry is held on the spot, at which any one who thinks he is wronged can come forward and urge his case. But when the landowners and the farmers consider themselves interested in an enclosure, can any one who is acquainted with the helpless and dependent condition of the agricultural labourers for one moment suppose that they will come forward and assert their rights? The provisions of the Act of Parliament which regulates enclosures are rarely understood even by more educated people, and probably half the labourers suppose that nothing short of some miraculous interposition would enable them to resist the great men of the locality. Perhaps it will be said, the rich are generally the protectors of the poor; and when every one is so anxious that people should have healthy recreation, and that the poor should have gardens, there will be always some one who will take care that land is reserved for each of these purposes. But six acres for gardens and three for recreation grounds out of 6900 acres is a sad commentary upon such a pleasing theory. Let us hear what the parish clerk of Withypool says on the subject. Some member of the committee asked him whether the resident landlords did not protest when only one acre was reserved for a recreation ground. His reply was: "The landlords seem to say that we had got recreation ground enough; besides, the labourers could go to work, and recreate themselves with that."

In many villages where there were once extensive tracts of common land, there is now not even a field

in which lads are permitted to play. But serious as are the evils which result from such inadequate reservations, yet these evils are insignificant compared with the mischief which may be produced by permitting the enclosure of land to be carried too far. The time has come when statesmen should be pressed to inquire whether our policy should not be reversed, and the enclosure of lands should in future be discouraged. The preamble to the Act of 1845 affirms that it is desirable to facilitate the enclosure of lands. Are we justified in continuing to act on this maxim, either by the experience of the past or by anticipations of the future? It has been calculated that from the beginning of the eighteenth century up to the year 1845 about seven million acres of land had been enclosed. Since 1845 this quantity has been increased by 484,893 acres. Suppose it could be proved that the nation had been benefited in the past by enclosures, it would not follow that the system ought to continue unchecked. The most fanatical upholder of the rights of lords of manors would scarcely venture to assert that in a country whose population is increasing, all the land should become the property of individual owners, and thus the public should have no right, except by sufferance, to leave the highway. There are, however, many considerations which make it doubtful whether even in past years the country has derived unmixed benefit from the enclosure of lands. Those display an unfortunate ignorance who so frequently assert that political economy favours the enclosure of lands. Can any one point to

a principle of economic science from which it could be argued that land over which the public exercises valuable rights should be appropriated to individual owners? It may possibly be urged that when a common is brought under cultivation, more wealth is produced. But surely the events of the last few years have abundantly shown that an increased production of wealth is not all that need be considered. It might be with some reason maintained that agricultural labourers would be pecuniarily benefited by the enclosure of lands; the strongest arguments, in fact, which are advanced in favour of enclosures are—that by bringing land under cultivation a greater quantity of food is produced for the people, and more employment is provided for rural labourers. Examining this last argument first, let us ask whether there is any advantage in extending the area of employment whilst the agricultural labourer's condition continues what is. In order to state the case definitely, it may be assumed that if enclosures had been restricted, the area of cultivated land in such a county as Dorsetshire would be less by 10 per cent.; consequently there would be 10 per cent. fewer labourers in that county. But can any one pretend to say that this would be a misfortune either to the labourers themselves or to the nation? Is there any advantage, any honour, any glory in stimulating an increase in the number of those who live in helpless ignorance and dependence, upon ten or eleven shillings a week? There is no hope that they will raise their condition; it is only too certain that when their strength is pre-

maturely exhausted by hard work and insufficient food, they will have, as paupers, to be supported by parochial relief.

But the case can be presented in a still stronger aspect; for, as previously mentioned, facts can be adduced which shew that in the middle of the last century the rural labourer was better off than he is now; this is to be attributed in no small degree to the enclosures which have taken place on so large a scale since that period. It would, no doubt, be erroneous to assert that no land ought to have been enclosed during the past century; but the evidence appears to be conclusive that, in consequence of the manner in which enclosures have been carried out, grave injury has been inflicted upon the rural labourers. Various authorities are quoted by the Agricultural Commissioners which completely substantiate this opinion. It will be sufficient to select one passage from the work of a well-known writer on rural economy. The Rev. D. Davis, rector of Barkham, Berks, writing in 1795, remarks that "cottages have been progressively deprived of the little land formerly let with them, and also their rights of commonage have been swallowed up in large farms by enclosures. Thus an amazing number of people have been reduced from a comfortable state of partial independence to a precarious state as mere hirelings, who, when out of work, come immediately upon the parish." Can any one deny that these agencies, so deeply deplored by Mr Davis, as prejudicially affecting the condition of the labourer, have continued uninterruptedly in operation up to the present time? Are we not now obliged to confess that

our rural labourers, to use Mr Davis's significant words, "have lost that partial independence which they once possessed;" they have become mere hirelings with not even the smallest rights of proprietorship in the soil which they cultivate? Formerly, almost every rural labourer either possessed some right of common or had some copyhold land which gave him a proprietary interest in the soil more or less direct. It is no consolation to tell the existing generation that their forefathers who possessed rights of common received an adequate compensation at the time the enclosure was effected: if this compensation was provided in land, the land has long since been sold; if given in the form of money, the money has long since been spent. Posterity is thus robbed and impoverished without any means of redress. It is of fundamental importance to remember that if commons are not enclosed, posterity cannot be thus plundered, for a right of common is a form of property which cannot be alienated. The late Sir Robert Peel, with the prescience of a true statesman, once said: "The House of Commons must be cautious how it dealt lightly with these rights of common. It might be a matter of feeling. Honourable members had their feelings, and the poorer class of the community had feelings on this subject. The right of common connected them with the soil; the right of turning a goose on a common made a man feel interested in the tenure of land. It might be more beneficial to a tenant that he should accept £2 or £3, but recollect that you were not dealing with the rights of the individual, but with those

of his successors." Sir Robert Peel, in this last sentence, recognized a fundamental principle which is too frequently forgotten when discussing the subject of enclosures. In past years all the owners of common rights might have been liberally compensated, and yet their successors might still be severely injured. Many of the descendants of those who once possessed valuable rights of common are agricultural labourers, to whose miserable condition allusion has already been made. Our rural population has been deprived of that which once gave a most important addition to their income. The common often enabled them to keep some poultry, a pig, and a cow. Many villages may now be traversed, and not a single labourer can be found possessing a head of poultry; few even keep a pig, and not one in ten thousand has a cow. What is the result of this? The labourer does not live as well as he did a hundred years since; he and his family seldom taste meat, and his children often suffer cruelly from the difficulty he has in obtaining milk for them. He has not, moreover, inherited, as a set-off against these grave disadvantages, one shilling of the compensation originally given to his ancestor for the relinquishment of rights of common. Any one who is acquainted with our rural labourers must be aware that they fully recognize and keenly feel the injury which has been thus done them. Not long since I happened to be conversing with an agricultural labourer in a southern county. After having remarked that a cow which was passing us was his, he said, in a tone of peculiar melancholy: "I shall soon have to get

rid of her, and when she goes I sha'n't stop here any longer, but shall emigrate. My wages are so small that I don't know how I could bring up my children if it wasn't for the help she gave me." Upon asking him why he should be obliged to sell his cow, he simply said, "They are going to enclose our common;" and he significantly asked how it was that a gentleman, who had something like 10,000 acres of his own, could be so anxious to get hold of the poor man's common. Remembering that the Home Secretary had defended enclosures in the House of Commons because the Home Office never received complaints from the locality, I asked this labourer why he and his friends did not resist that which they so much dreaded? He replied that he had never heard of the Home Office; and he evidently thought that I was suggesting to him just as hopeless a task as if I had advised him to induce the river, by the side of which we were standing, to flow in an opposite direction. It should surely be remembered that, although the landed interest is abundantly represented in Parliament, those who till the land have no one who is directly interested either in adequately expressing their wants or in effectively protesting against any injustice inflicted upon them.

Some who are prepared to admit that the loss of a common often does grave injury to the poor, seem to consider that enclosures ought to be promoted because of the increased quantity of produce which is raised; but it is by no means certain that enclosures carried beyond certain limits augment the production

of wealth. There is good reason for believing that these limits have already been reached. It has been previously remarked that in a country whose population is increasing, meat and dairy produce constantly tend to become relatively more costly than corn. Meat, butter, and milk are difficult and expensive to import, because they are perishable articles; consequently, the area from which they can be obtained is comparatively limited. Corn, on the other hand, can be imported from the most distant localities; wheat is often sent to England in large quantities from Australia and California. Hence, corn can be obtained from a constantly extending area, as means of locomotion are improved, and new sources of supply are developed. Many of the commons were most valuable and productive pastures; experience is each day shewing that the milk, butter, and cheese which they yielded are the very commodities which are each year becoming more costly, and therefore more difficult to obtain. It is no valid argument to urge that some of the commons were unimproved and neglected wastes: a little management and organization would easily enable all necessary improvements to be carried out without resorting to the extreme expedient of enclosure. If, for instance, a competent inspector should report that a common required drainage, the drainage works might be ordered to be carried out, and the expense thus incurred might be defrayed by imposing upon the owners of common rights an *ad valorem* rate, to be continued during a certain number of years. If a common were improved as a place of

public resort, a portion of the expenses ought then to be borne by all the ratepayers of the locality.

In many instances it is not even pretended that the motive which prompts an enclosure is a desire to effect agricultural improvements. The passion for the preservation of game, which has gradually assumed such dangerous proportions, now probably exerts a more powerful influence than any other circumstance to promote enclosures. People who spend a great part of their lives in slaughtering half-tamed pheasants are naturally desirous to keep the public as far off as possible from their preserves. This constant pursuit of what is falsely called "sport" often generates so much selfishness that a man is willing that the enjoyment of the public should be sacrificed in order that he may kill a few more hares and pheasants. Sometimes an enclosure is prompted by another kind of selfishness, which has been aptly designated "the greed for land." Two or three large proprietors continue increasing their estates, until they at length come to think that the whole locality ought to be apportioned among them. If the symmetry of their estates should happen to be disturbed by any one possessing a few acres of land, he is considered an intruder, and his little freehold is an eyesore to the great proprietors. A common affects them in much the same way; and, in order to achieve the grand object of being able to say that no one else in the neighbourhood possesses a ringle rood of land, they appeal to Parliament to aid them in destroying these commons over which the public exercise some proprie-

tary rights. A Parliament so largely composed of those who are either great landowners, or who wish to become great landowners, responds to such an appeal with cordial sympathy.

We have hitherto chiefly considered the enclosure of land so far as it affects a rural population. The subject may, however, be presented in another aspect, which will shew that those who are perhaps most interested in this question are the inhabitants of our large towns. It is almost impossible to over-estimate the advantages which a common may confer as a place of recreation. Those especially who have to live in London the whole year through, would find the place almost unendurable if it were not for its parks and the open spaces in its neighbourhood. Would any sum of money compensate Londoners for the loss of Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, Blackheath, Wimbledon, Clapham, and other commons? But great as the value of these open spaces to the public now is, their value rapidly augments as population increases. Their loss, moreover, would be absolutely irreparable; land once built over will never again be used for out-door recreation. These metropolitan commons are in some respects of far more importance than the parks. The beauty possessed by the London parks is, to a great extent, due to art; whereas such a place as Hampstead Heath has all the charm of natural scenery. The preservation of commons, therefore, becomes a question of great social, moral, and educational importance. How can it be expected that the health and *morale* of our industrial classes

can be maintained, if there are no places within easy access where they can obtain health-giving recreation? The most effective way to draw people from haunts of vice and intemperance is to make them feel that they will find something more attractive elsewhere. Just at this time, when trade is depressed, every one is eagerly looking out for something which will improve our commercial position. Much has been said about technical education; it is asserted that the artistic faculties of our workmen have not been adequately developed. A Goverment Department of Science and Art has been established, and the formation of museums is promoted. All these efforts deserve encouragement, but if we desire to develop the scientific and artistic faculties of our people, it will not be done simply by giving them specimens to look at and models to draw. All experience has shown that nature is the inseparable companion of science and art. Botany, geology, and natural history must be studied in the field as well as in the museum. Are we going to commit the monstrous absurdity of building museums, and placing in them collections of dried plants and insects, when at the same time we permit the enclosure, and consequently the destruction, of some of the best botanical and entomological grounds in the kingdom? Every one knows that a day spent in a favourable locality, under the guidance of a skilful man of science, is more likely to develop in the young a taste for botany and entomology than a whole lifetime passed in a museum. It seems that any such considerations as these never

enter the minds of the Enclosure Commissioners. One of the witnesses who gave evidence about Wisley Common said that it was an excellent place for studying botany and entomology, in consequence of the number of rare plants and insects with which it abounds. One of the Enclosure Commissioners, in evidence which he afterwards gave, seemed to think that absurdity was carried to its extreme verge when a committee of the House of Commons was asked, in the interests of science, not to recommend the enclosure of a common. It is too frequently forgotten that the accident of favourable circumstances develops a taste for science in those amongst whom we might least expect it would be found. The rector of Bethnal Green, the Rev. Septimus Hansard, whose opinion is entitled to particular attention, has said that visits to Epping Forest have created in many of his poor East-end parishioners a very marked taste for natural history. In a letter on the subject, Mr Hansard says: "Epping Forest is a fine field for educational purposes, and it is thus used. Members of Parliament and rich landlords, by encouraging the enclosure of the forest, little know the kind of men, among others, whom they are driving from it. There is in my neighbourhood (Bethnal Green) an Entomological Society, consisting of fifty members, all working-men, who pay a penny a week. They have thousands of specimens, chiefly collected in Epping Forest. Some of the members are parishioners of mine; and one, an immediate neighbour, has his house full from top to bottom of insects and birds, all most beautifully preserved. There

is another society almost as large at Mile End; and also other smaller societies; they are all composed of working men—that is artisans and mechanics... There are insects in Epping Forest, specimens of which have never yet been taken elsewhere; and men go after them constantly from my parish. You may see them under the trees, sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, generally on Sundays, often on week-day holidays, with their nets, catching butterflies and other insects."

It may be hoped that the Metropolitan Commons Act, which was passed in 1866, has done somewhat to preserve the commons in the neighbourhood of London, for it has forbidden their being brought within the operation of the General Enclosure Acts. The commons therefore, near London, cannot now be enclosed, unless the lord of the manor can establish his right of enclosure at law. Though this act has already done, and is capable of doing much good, yet it is quite inadequate to provide effectual security for the preservation of the commons. It is often erroneously supposed that an enclosure cannot take place without the sanction of Parliament. This, however, is not the case. Enclosures are constantly taking place without any resort to Parliament. In fact, parliamentary aid is only invoked to facilitate the process of enclosure. At the present moment many of our most valuable commons are in imminent danger. The lords of the manor being often wealthy people, whilst the commoners are generally poor, enclosures are carried on with impunity because the commoners cannot afford to incur the

serious cost of an expensive lawsuit. In two well-known instances, which have recently been the subjects of litigation, it is evident that Berkhampstead and Plumstead Commons have only escaped destruction through the fortunate accident that two of the commoners who were opposed to the enclosures were wealthy persons who were willing to bear the burden of a long and expensive lawsuit. Too much praise can scarcely be given to Mr Augustus Smith and Mr Julian Goldsmid, who undertook these legal proceedings. Had it not been for their public spirit, the people would have been for ever deprived of two of the most valuable and beautiful commons in the neighbourhood of London.

Since all commons are in the critical position just described, the time has come when it should be seriously considered whether Parliament, acting as trustee for the public, should not take under its protection all the remaining commons. After a careful survey of these lands had been made, a proper compensation should be given to the lords of the manors, based on the principle of fairly remunerating them for the income they derived from the common in its unenclosed condition. They cannot fairly be considered to have any claim for compensation on the supposition that the common might some day be converted into private property. This principle of compensation receives an important sanction from a measure recently passed in Parliament, which recompenses Lord Spencer for his manorial rights over Wimbledon Common, by an an-

nuity equivalent in amount to the income he up to the present time annually derived from the common.

If Parliament obtained possession of all the unenclosed land, portions of it, either in the neighbourhood of large towns or possessing great natural beauty, ought to be permanently kept in an unenclosed state for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. No accumulation of wealth, however great, will justify us to posterity if we permit the country to become less beautiful. The remaining portions of the unenclosed land should be kept as a reserve, upon which new industrial experiments, such as co-operative agriculture, as described in a previous chapter, might be tried. All these remarks are of course intended to apply to the Crown lands. They should be administered on the principle of making them most conducive to the general well-being of the community.

Epping Forest, which is one of the most valuable of the open spaces in the neighbourhood of London, is at the present moment in imminent danger of being enclosed, in consequence of the extraordinary policy which seems likely to be adopted by the present Government. Every one, like Mr Hansard, who is acquainted with the poor and densely-packed population of the East end of London, is aware that the loss of Epping Forest would be an irreparable misfortune to them. This tract of land still possesses many of the charms of wild forest scenery; its quiet glades and shady groves have for centuries been a favourite resort of Londoners. It would not, perhaps, be much missed by those who have

the means and leisure to obtain change of scene whenever they may desire it; but to many an overworked artisan a day spent in Epping Forest with his wife and children is perhaps his only real holiday. The history of the way in which Epping Forest has been gradually filched from the public, and appropriated by private proprietors, exhibits not only individual selfishness, but wanton carelessness on the part of Government departments. This forest was formerly a royal hunting-ground; the monarch had consequently not only the right to wander over it unimpeded, but also to prevent anything being done which would interfere with the pasturage of deer. It is therefore evident, that as long as these forestal rights were maintained by the Crown, not an acre of the forest could be enclosed or appropriated. As recently as the year 1854 there were still 7000 acres of the forest remaining. The Commissioners of Woods and Forests then commenced a policy which it is difficult to stigmatise with adequate severity. They acted without the authority of Parliament, and that which they did was, moreover, of doubtful legality. Regarding themselves as a department for obtaining revenue, and finding that the forestal rights of the Crown in Epping Forest yielded no income, they perpetrated an act of extraordinary folly; they commenced selling these Crown rights. Parliament permitted this to go on unchecked for eight years. The result was that in 1862 the area of the forest had been reduced from 7000 to 3000 acres*. It will scarcely be believed that the

* A quantity of land about equal to this has been improperly en-

amount which was yielded to the exchequer by this sacrifice of 4000 acres of land was the miserable sum of £18,503. 16*s.* 3*d.* If a wretched and contemptible economy had prompted this sacrifice, why did not some one direct his attention to those sinecure offices which still exist in abundance? The abolition of a couple of these would in half the time have saved more money to the country. The mischief resulting from the sale of these Crown rights is not alone to be measured by the 4000 acres of land which were taken from the forest. This is well pointed out in the following extract from a memorial presented to the Commissioner of Works by the Commons Preservation Society, on May 1, 1869:

"These sales encouraged encroachments upon land over which the Crown still retained its rights. It seems to have been thought that, if the Crown was so anxious to dispose of its rights for the insignificant sum that could be obtained in the market, it would not be willing to go to any expense to protect those rights, and that encroachments might be made with impunity. At all events, encroachments did multiply about this period. In particular, Mr Hodgson, lord of the manor of Chingford St Paul's, after refusing to buy the forestal rights, thus enclosed about 300 acres, cutting down the timber,

closed; some of it without the sanction of the Crown and over which the Crown rights have not been sold. Other portions of the Forest have been enclosed without the consent of the commoners. Competent legal authorities assert that the whole, or nearly the whole of these lands thus improperly enclosed, might be recovered for the public.

destroying the covert for the deer, and breaking up the land for cultivation."

The saddest part, however, of this sad story still remains to be told. The inhabitants of the East end of London naturally became alarmed at these continual encroachments. The forest is, in fact, being almost daily appropriated. A public meeting was held on the subject at Mile End during the summer of 1869, and a deputation was appointed to wait upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr Lowe received the deputation on the 4th of August. It was pointed out to him that the only effectual way of preserving the forest was for the Crown to assert its forestal rights. A distinguished barrister, Mr Lushington, who accompanied the deputation, maintained, upon his authority as a lawyer, that "The established right of the Crown over Epping Forest is incontestable. If an action was taken at law, the cost, as in a former case, might be some £1500. If Mr Hodgson is beaten, of course all the others who encroached upon the forest lands would have to give way too; so that, in the result, the £1500 would secure the forest for ever to the use of the public. If nothing were done, they would simply lose the whole of the forest in the course of time." The reply of Mr Lowe to these appeals may well excite surprise. He declined to give any promise that the Crown rights over Epping Forest would be maintained. He argued that these rights were originally granted to enable the monarch to hunt deer; and, since this pastime was no longer followed by royalty, it would be harsh and unjust to maintain against lords of manors

rights which are no longer required for the purpose for which they were originally granted. This reply seems to have startled the deputation. One of its members reminded Mr Lowe that in 1866 Mr Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply to a question put to him in the House of Commons, had said: "An arrangement has been made with respect to these forestal rights, with the full concurrence of Her Majesty, that will have the effect of bringing them out of a state of conflict with the interests of the community, and will enable them to be dealt with from time to time, or at the proper season, in a manner that will be satisfactory to all concerned." This assurance, which had filled the members of the deputation with complete satisfaction, was characterised by Mr Lowe as "oracular." "I cannot tell," he said, "what it means: it is all very oracular." A member of the deputation then exclaimed: "Mr Gladstone is too great, too good, and too generous a man to hold out a bait like that and not carry out what he has promised. I rely upon his promise." Mr Lowe then repeated that he did not know what it meant, but supposed that the expression of Mr Gladstone, that the forestal rights would be dealt with in a manner satisfactory to all concerned, simply meant that he would try to "please everybody, the lords of the manors included."

Directly the session of 1870 commenced the Government was pressed to do something to preserve Epping Forest. In the House of Commons an address to the Queen was accordingly carried, praying her to exercise

the rights which the Crown possessed over the Forest, so that it might be preserved as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. The Government promised to give effect to this address by introducing a measure on the subject. This promise was redeemed by the introduction of a bill which, had it not happily been defeated on a matter of form, would virtually have destroyed all that is most beautiful in the Forest. By far the larger portion of it would have been given over to the lords of the manors, and the public would only have obtained a few isolated and comparatively useless patches. The subject is for the present in abeyance. Unfortunately, however, there is only too much reason to fear that the Forest will be almost daily encroached upon.

The argument that the Crown ought not to maintain its forestal rights, because they are no longer required for the purposes for which they were originally granted, would lead to some very strange conclusions. When grants of land were originally made to private persons, there was always associated with its possession the performance of some duty. The monarch made grants of land to barons on the condition that they should render to him a certain amount of armed assistance. The baron, again, would grant land to some of his retainers upon the understanding that he would receive from them certain personal services. The right of property in land was always accompanied with certain reciprocal duties. No one can doubt that this is the case with the rights possessed by lords of manors. An able writer

has remarked: "Time was when the rights of a lord of the manor had corresponding duties; when he exercised justice, maintained security, and his courts were the common tribunals of his manor." The original purposes, therefore, for which lords of the manor existed have ceased as entirely as the original purposes for which the forestal rights of the Crown were granted. There is, however, this difference between the two cases: the rights of lords of manors are to be rigidly maintained because they are supposed to form a part of the sacred institution of private property in land. The rights of the Crown are to be ignored because, if exercised, they would not lead to the accumulation of individual wealth; they would simply secure the nation against the loss of a source of enjoyment which gives happiness to vast numbers of the people. Englishmen will have sadly degenerated in public spirit if they tamely submit to see themselves thus despoiled of a valuable possession.

From what has been said, it appears that Epping Forest is in a somewhat peculiar position. Its preservation does not require any special legislation; on the contrary, all that is needed is that the Crown, by ordinary legal proceedings, should assert and maintain its rights. In this case, therefore, the arguments do not apply which are sure to be advanced against any proposals that may be made for preventing ordinary enclosures. It is usually urged that whenever an attempt is made to preserve a common the rights of property are seriously encroached upon. Those who reason in this way apparently think that a common is absolutely the

property of the lord of the manor and of the commoners; the public is supposed to possess no right in it whatever. In strict legal phraseology this is no doubt true, because the rights of the public cannot be legally defined. But there is this essential difference between a common and land which is owned by private proprietors: every one has a right to wander over the common by immemorial usage, and the reality of this right is at once evidenced by the fact that no lord of a manor can exclude the public from a common by surrounding it with a fence. It is highly inexpedient that Parliament should intervene to facilitate the enclosure of lands, if it can be shewn that these enclosures are now no longer economically desirable, and that they deprive the public of a valuable right. The loss inflicted on the general community was very aptly described by the parish clerk of Withypool, to whom allusion has already been made. One member of the committee asked him whether, if the people of Withypool lost their common, they would be able to walk about in the adjoining fields. He pithily replied: "Yes, they can trespass if they like to risk that." If the present system of enclosures is permitted to continue, in a few generations almost every common will have been destroyed; land will then probably be more eagerly sought after than now, and the people of England will have the satisfaction of feeling that the march of civilization has been so rapid, that if they desire to leave the high road or public pathway, "they will be able to trespass if they like to risk that."

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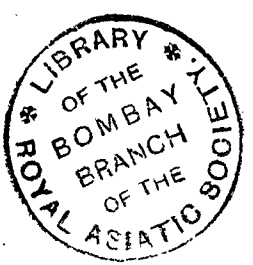

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